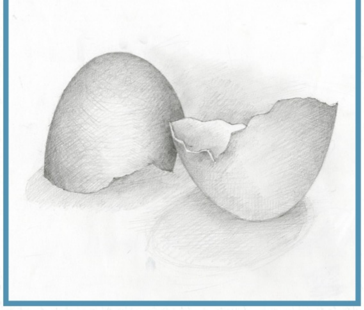




Drawing for the Absolute Beginner

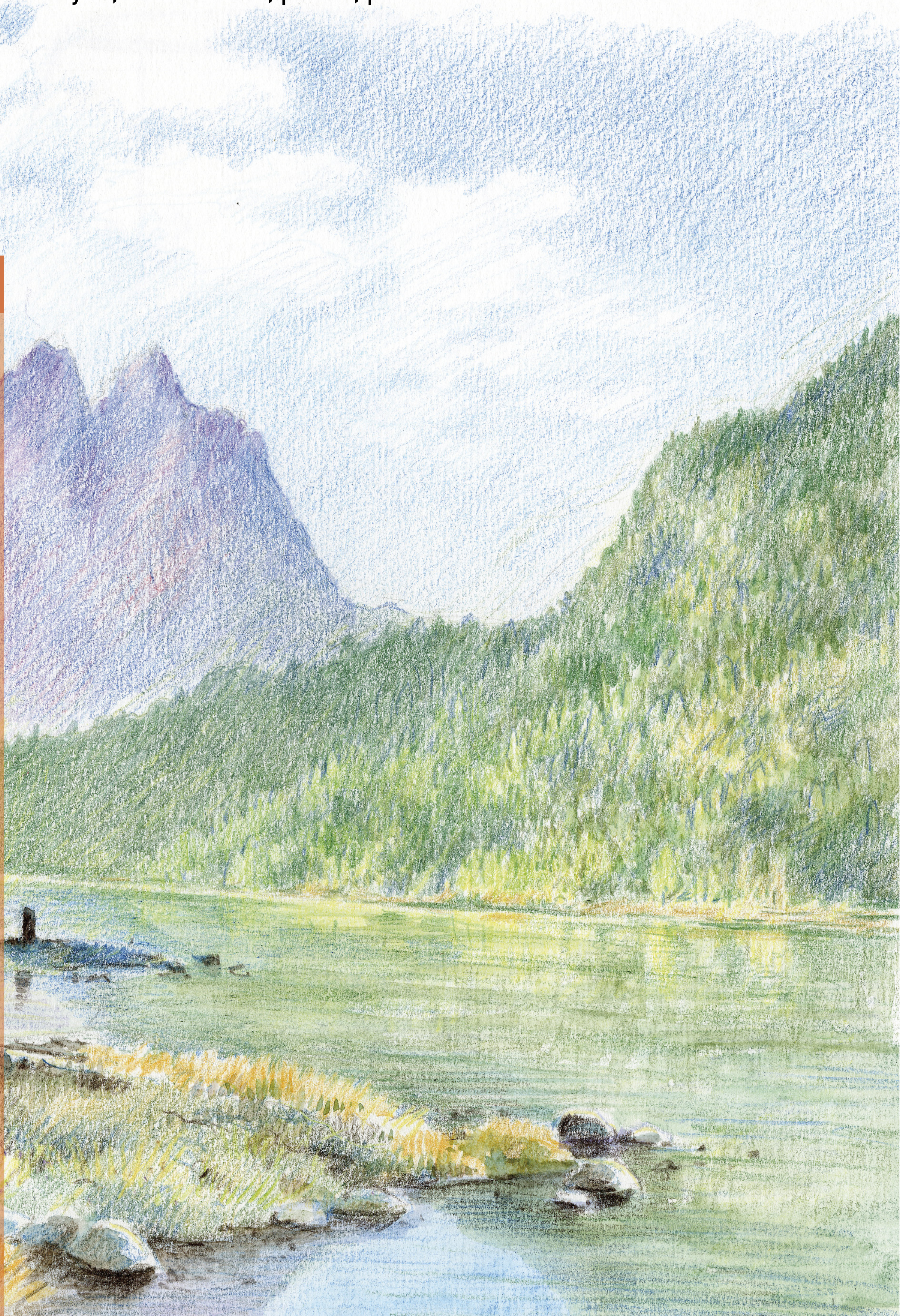
Carole Massey



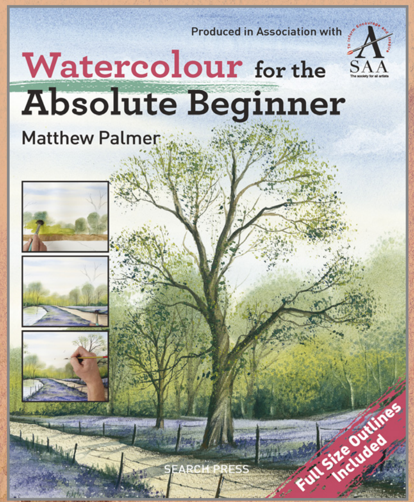
SEARCH PRESS



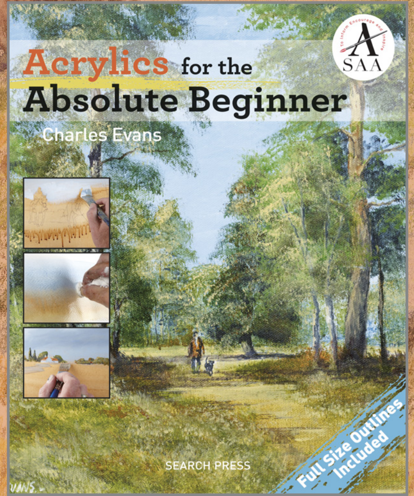
Carole Massey was born in Hertfordshire, UK, and studied at St. Alban's School of Art and Leicester School of Art & Design. After a career in advertising and graphic design, Carole returned to her first love, painting, full-time. She now teaches and runs weekend workshops, as well as organising painting holidays. Carole's work is exhibited widely, and she is particularly known for her celebrity portraits, mostly inspired by photographs. She uses a wide variety of media including acrylic, watercolour, pastel, pencil and monochrome.



Also in this series:



ISBN: 978-1-84448-825-4



ISBN: 978-1-78221-398-7

Drawing for the Absolute Beginner

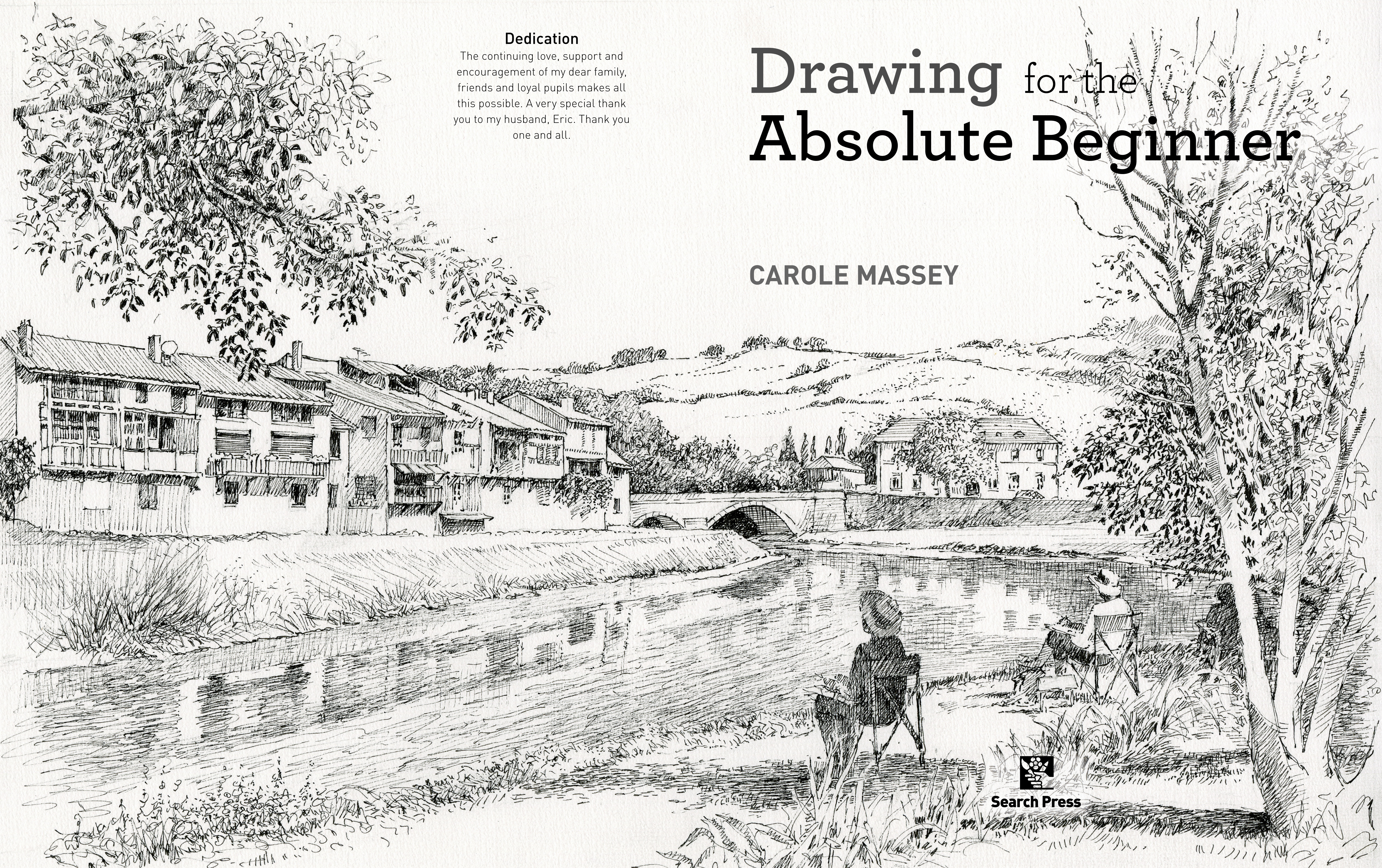


Dedication

The continuing love, support and encouragement of my dear family, friends and loyal pupils makes all this possible. A very special thank you to my husband, Eric. Thank you one and all.

Drawing for the Absolute Beginner

CAROLE MASSEY



Search Press

First published in Great Britain 2018

Search Press Limited
Wellwood, North Farm Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3DR

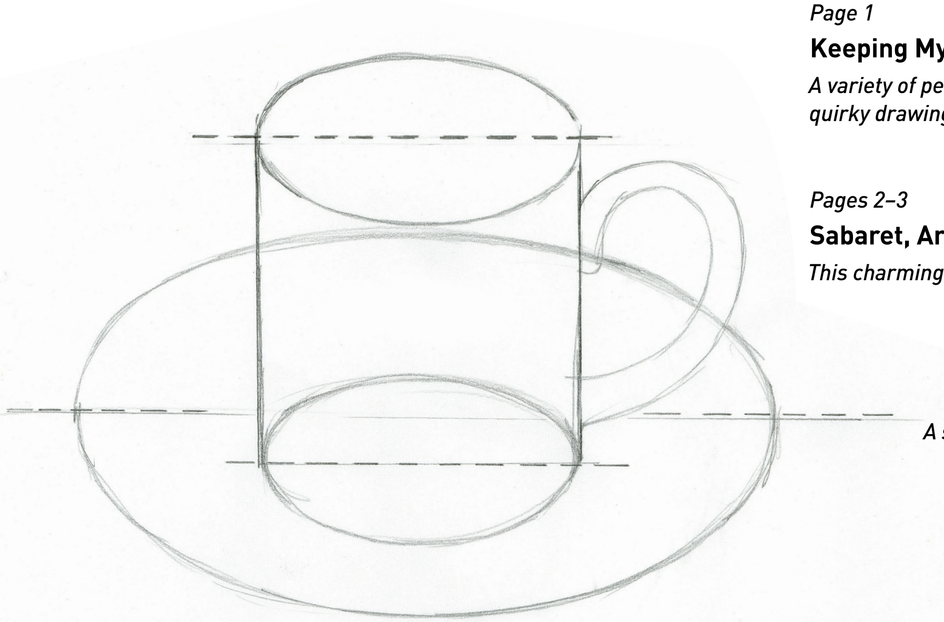
ISBN: 978-1-78221-455-7

eISBN: 978-1-78126-485-0

Suppliers
If you have difficulty in obtaining any of the materials and equipment mentioned in this book, then please visit the Search Press website: www.searchpress.com

The tracings used in this book can be downloaded from the Drawing for the Absolute Beginner page on the Search Press website, at https://www.searchpress.com/book/9781782214557/drawing-for-the-absolute-beginner*

*URL correct at time of printing



Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks to Edd, my editor, and to all at Search Press for your friendly and professional support.



Above
Breton Mice
A pencil drawing, full of character, on cartridge paper.

Page 1
Keeping My Hand In
A variety of pencil tones allows the hand to become the focus of this quirky drawing.

Pages 2–3
Sabaret, Ariege, France
This charming scene lends itself well to the clean detail of pen.

Opposite
Three Tulips
A simple close-up composition worked in coloured pencil.

Contents



Introduction

Henri Matisse (1869–1954) said that he looked at a tomato quite differently when he wanted to eat it from when he wanted to paint it. In other words, he would disregard everything except its shape and colour when he was considering it as a source of inspiration.

The same applies to drawing. When we draw a table, a flower or a figure, it is no longer the familiar piece of kitchen furniture, the scented bloom in the garden, or the person sitting in a café: instead, our subject becomes a series of geometric shapes, a fusion of selected marks and lines, and an interplay of light and dark tones, all of which we have to observe in an analytical, abstract way in order to draw.

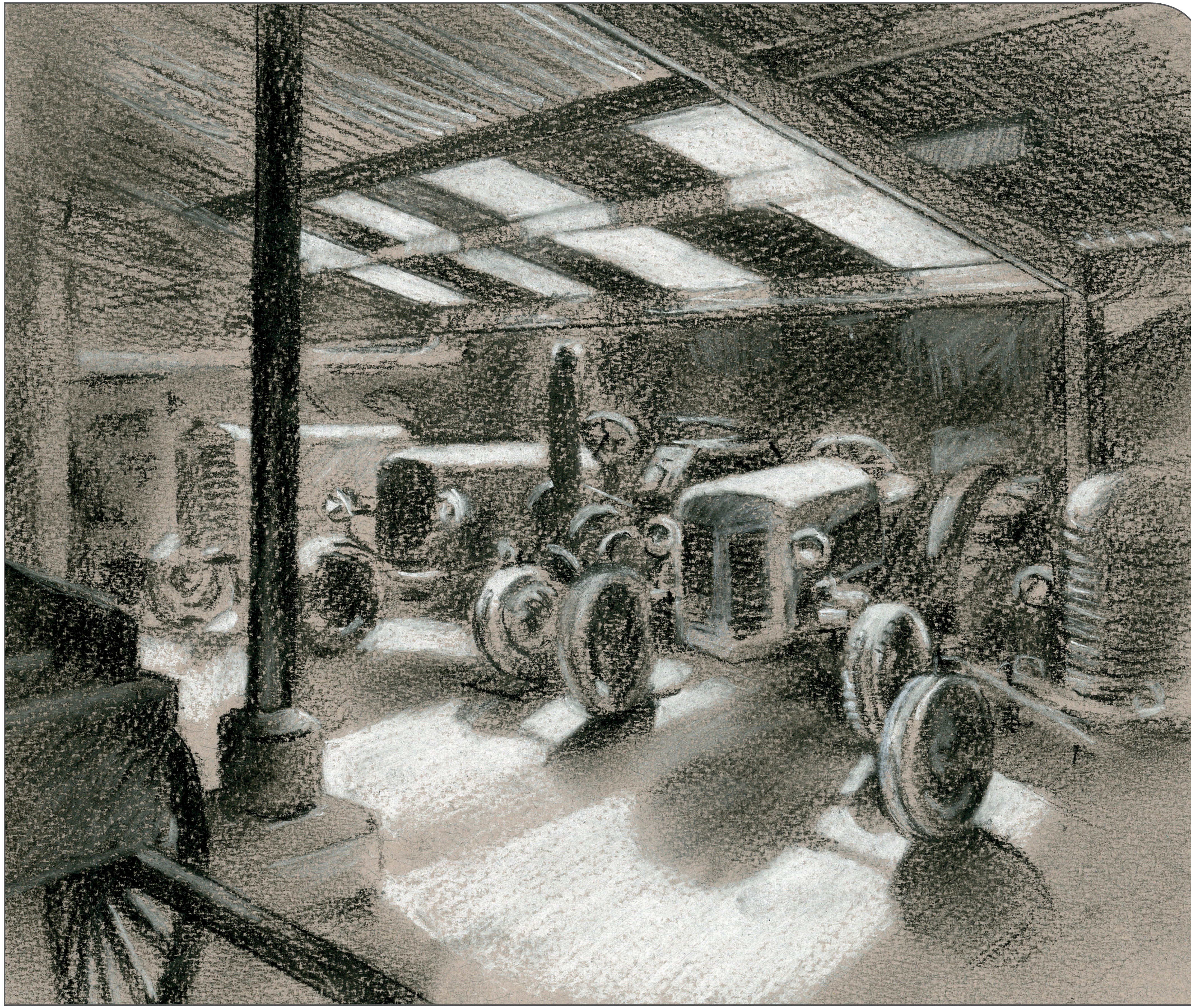
This book is designed to help you progress from simple drawing techniques – drawing lines, circles, squares and ellipses – through to capturing landscapes, figures and buildings. Step-by-step exercises will guide you through drawing a simple still life, and show you how to add shading using pencil, pen and charcoal.

After gaining confidence with freehand drawing indoors, I encourage you to go outside to draw from nature. Keeping a sketchbook is a great way of tracking your progress and this book contains information on how to do just that.

The section on drawing landscapes tackles tree shapes, foliage, skies and water. Composition, perspective and buildings, and mastering figures and movement are also covered with simple exercises to follow as well as more complex drawings to inspire and encourage. At the back of the book there are outlines to help with some of the larger drawings.

Anyone can learn to draw; it's learning to see that's the challenge! If you can write your name, you already have the manual dexterity to draw and interpret the world around us.

Drawing, like any other skill, has to be learned and practised; the more you do, the better you will become – so let's get started!



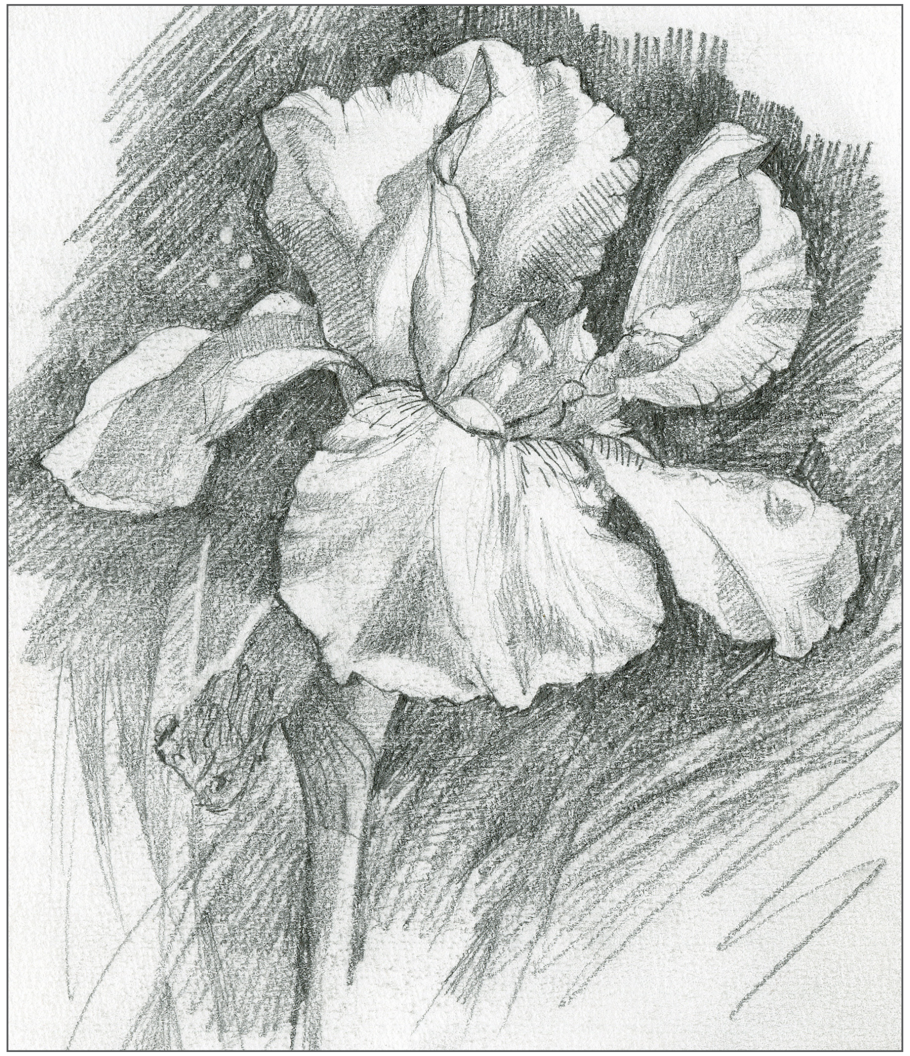
Old Tractors
Charcoal and white pastel pencil on tinted pastel paper.

First steps

Before you even pick up a pencil, consider your drawing position. If you are sitting at a table or desk, you should ideally try to work on a surface with the top end raised to create a slope. If your pad of paper has a stiff cover, or you are working on a board, put two or three books under it at the top; having your working surface elevated allows you to better judge what you are drawing. Alternatively, if you prefer, you can sit or stand at an easel with the working surface upright.

If you are working on a loose sheet of paper, secure it with some clips or masking tape at the corners so that it does not move because when you start measuring angles, the position of the paper needs to be consistent.

Most of the drawings in the book were made on cartridge paper. I prefer one which has a slight grain (or 'tooth'), rather than a smooth surface. Cartridge paper is a good all-round paper that will take pencil, pen, charcoal and some water-soluble media. The thickness of paper is measured by its weight. For drawing, I would recommend 140–220gsm (85–100lb).



Iris

Although it may appear complex, this iris is built up from simple underlying shapes using just graphite pencil and cartridge paper.

Pencils

Pencils are graded depending on their degree of hardness. On the shaft of any good quality pencil you will see a grade mark – H meaning hard, and B meaning black, or soft. Grades vary from 9H (extremely hard) to 9B (extremely soft), with HB in the middle of the range.

You need just three pencils to begin with: HB is the palest tone I commonly use, and 6B the darkest. 2B is an in-between mid tone, suitable for most drawing.

Although you will need to correct your work, try to use an eraser sparingly and only after you have rectified your mistakes. It is all too easy to erase a mark, only to redraw it, wrongly, in the same place a second time. Sometimes a series of 'practice' marks can show the progression of the drawing and add to its story. Keep initial lines light so you can avoid having to erase them, and keep the sketch clean.



A selection of graphite pencils in a variety of grades. The pink-cased pencil is a propelling pencil, which will always give a consistent weight of line.



Additional tools to help with pencil drawing: a kneadable putty eraser, plastic eraser and electric eraser for correcting mistakes and creating texture; a ruler and set square to help with straight lines; and a craft knife for sharpening your pencils.



Holding the pencil

Hold the pencil firmly but not tightly, and rest your hand on the paper where possible – though avoid smudging the surface.



Sharpening your pencil

I recommend using a craft knife to sharpen your pencil, as it will give a finer, cleaner point than a rotary sharpener. Assuming you are right-handed, hold the pencil in your left hand, and use your left thumb to slowly push the blade away from you in a controlled motion. Always cut away from your body when using a craft knife.

Tip

If you are unsure about using such a sharp instrument, a rotary pencil sharpener will suffice.

Drawing lines and curves

Lines and shapes form the basic framework of all subjects. Mastering them gives you simple tools that you can use to help build your picture. Build your confidence by drawing a series of lines freehand with a 2B pencil on cartridge paper.



1 Start by drawing a series of parallel lines. Try to make each line as straight as possible, spacing them at regular intervals, using the same pressure for each line.



2 Next, draw another series of lines, making the first two close together, then gradually increase the gaps between each subsequent line.



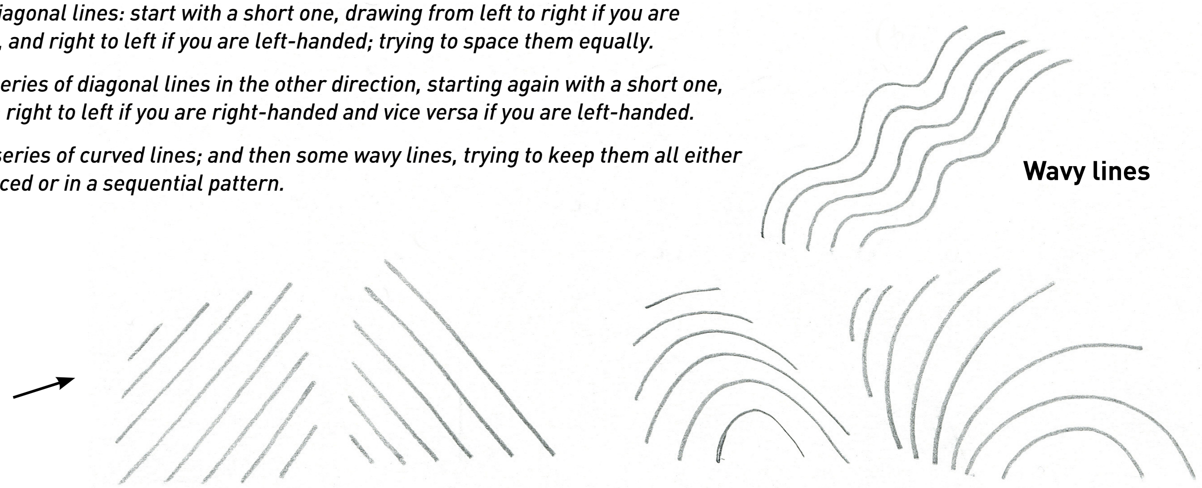
3 Draw a third set of lines, this time varying the pressure you apply to the pencil as you work, thus making successively darker marks.

Line practice

Draw some diagonal lines: start with a short one, drawing from left to right if you are right-handed, and right to left if you are left-handed; trying to space them equally.

Now draw a series of diagonal lines in the other direction, starting again with a short one, working from right to left if you are right-handed and vice versa if you are left-handed.

Next draw a series of curved lines; and then some wavy lines, trying to keep them all either regularly spaced or in a sequential pattern.



Wavy lines

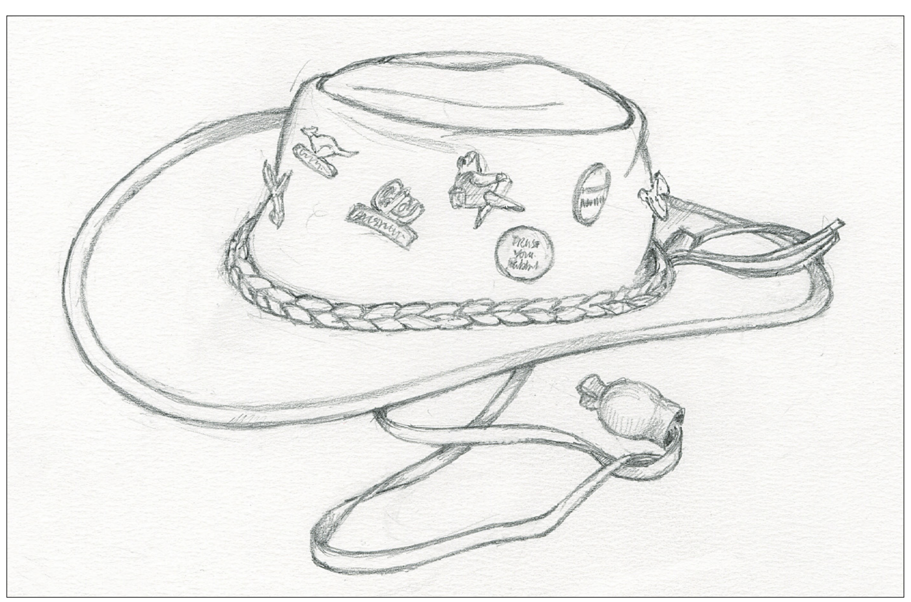
Start here

Curved lines

Australian Hat, pencil

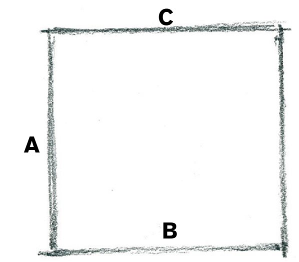
It may look complex in comparison with the lines above, but all of the shape and contours of this hat are rendered by different forms of line. This style of drawing, without tone or shading, is called 'line drawing'.

I like the badges which add character but I have avoided adding any specific lettering as it was too intricate for this scale.

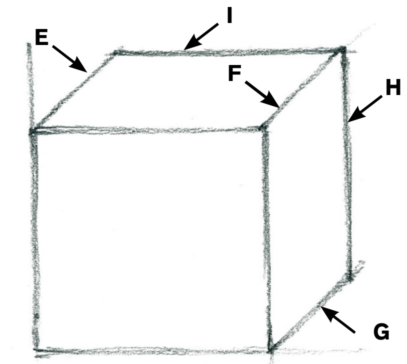


Drawing squares and cubes

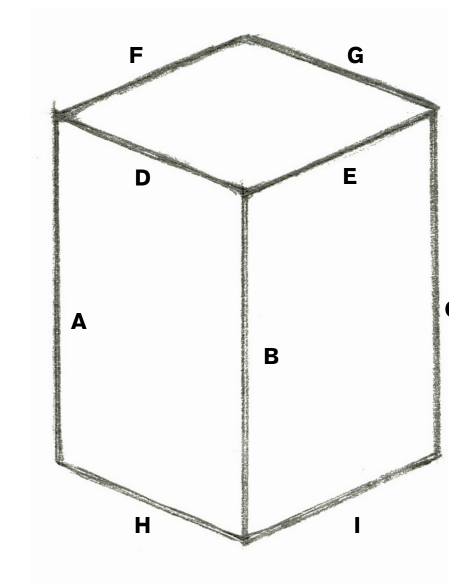
Squares and rectangles are simply collections of lines at right angles to one another, but the skill of consistently getting the lines straight and at the same length when working freehand (without a ruler) is worth developing, so practise until you can consistently draw even squares and rectangles.



1 Using a 2B pencil on cartridge paper, draw a vertical line (A), then, starting at the base of the line, draw a second line of the same length at right angles to it (B). Add two more lines of the same length to finish the square (C and D).



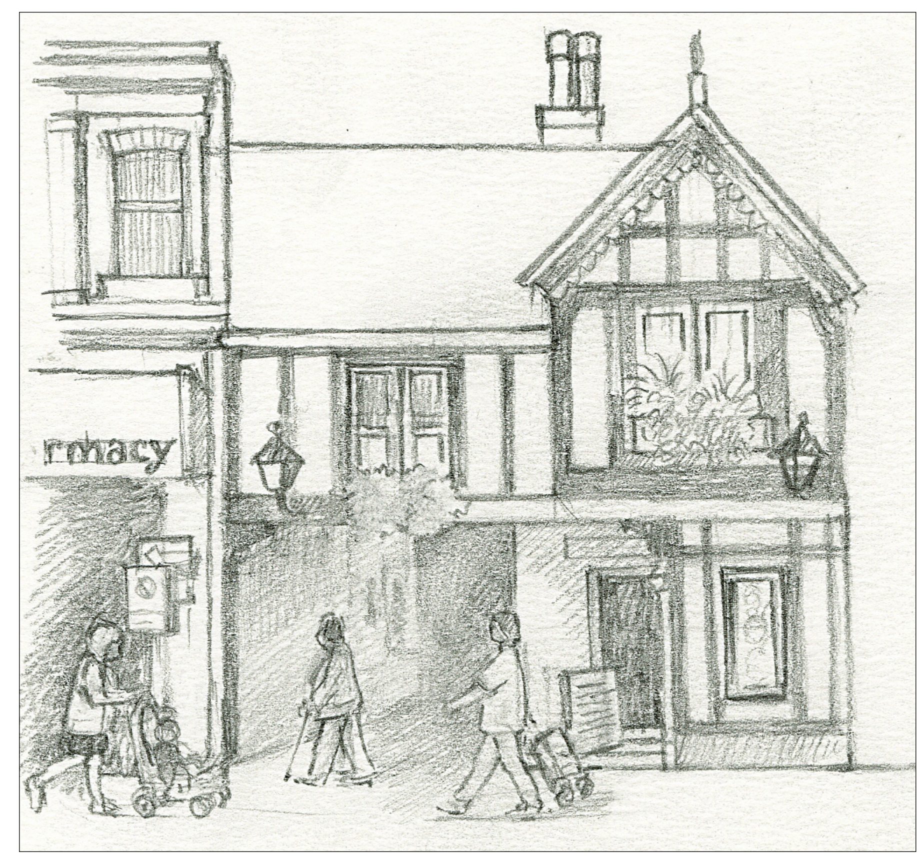
2 From the top left-hand corner, draw a short line at 45º (E), then another line the same length from the top right-hand corner (F) and one from the bottom right-hand corner (G). Now join the ends of the three short lines with lines parallel to the sides of the square (H and I) to form a box.



A different way of drawing a cube

Draw three vertical lines of equal length (A,B and C), with the middle line (B) a little lower than the other two. From the top of the middle line, draw two lines (D and E) out to meet the tips of the outer lines to form a shallow 'Y'.

Next, draw a line from the top left-hand corner (F), parallel with the right-hand arm of the 'Y'. Repeat this on the other side (G), to form a flattened diamond – the top of the cube. Draw two lines (H and I) to form the base, parallel to the arms of the 'Y', to form a cube in perspective.



A drawing using rectangles – High Street, Hitchin

The greater part of this drawing is made up with a series of differently sized rectangles to form the buildings, the timbered façades, the windows, doors and archway. It is viewed straight on so there is very little perspective (see pages 110–119 for information on drawing buildings in perspective) .

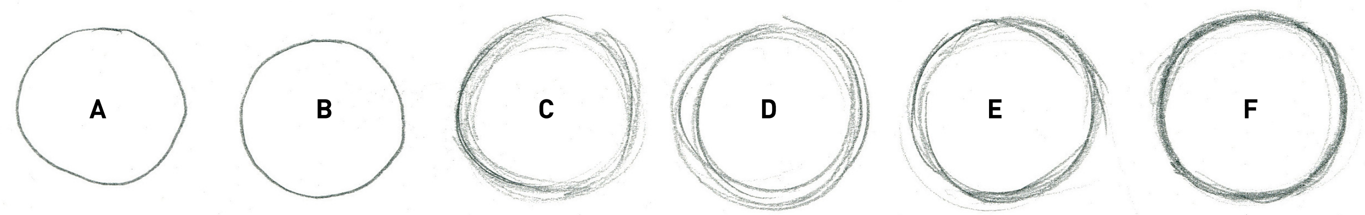
Drawing circles

Picasso famously used to instruct young artists to try to draw a perfect circle as a useful challenge, so let's follow in the footsteps of a technical master!

Moving the pencil

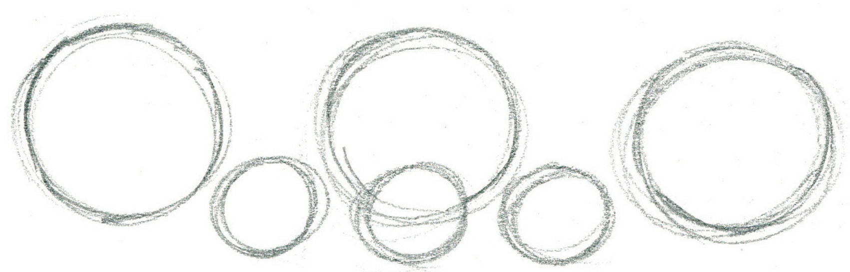
When drawing general shapes, it is more effective to work from your shoulder or elbow. For smaller details you work from the wrist only.

> **Tip**
>
> *To help draw a true circle, or adjust the drawing, turn the paper upside-down to check the circle is even.*



A and B were drawn by moving the wrist only. You can see that they are wobbly and misshapen.

C, D, E and F were drawn by keeping the wrist fairly rigid, but making the circular action working from the shoulder; creating an even, circular shape.

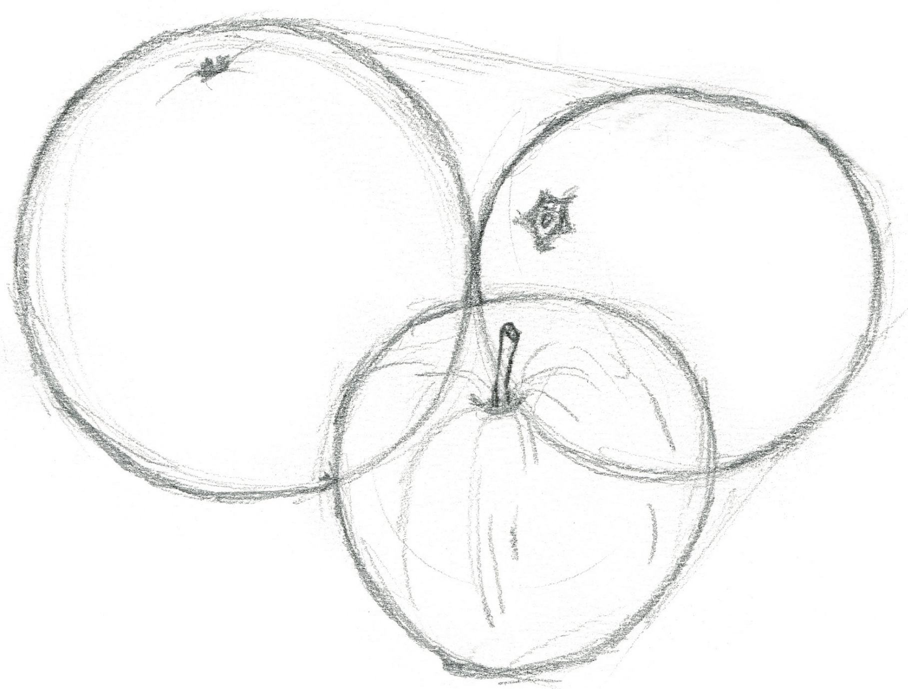


Circle practice

Draw a set of small circles, concentrating on making them the same size. Once you are happy, draw a set of larger circles, again making sure they are the same size as each other.

Three fruits drawn using circles

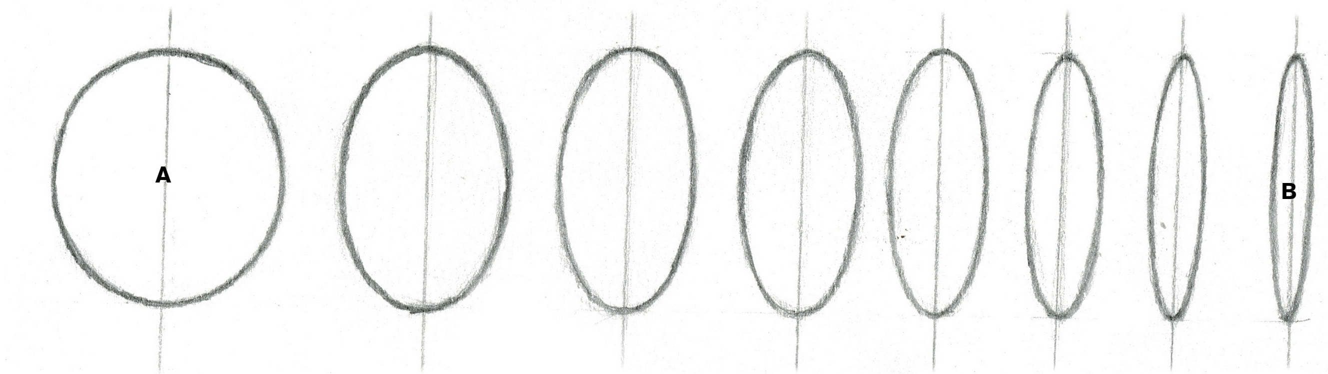
To create the shapes of the grapefruit, orange and apple, I started by drawing complete circles. Note that the fruits are not true spheres, so after the initial drawing, I refined their shape and added some detailing and shading. I have left in my construction lines which would normally be erased at the end.



Drawing ellipses

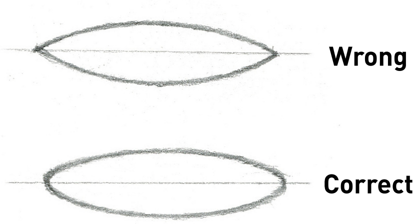
A circle seen at an angle becomes an ellipse. The depth of the ellipse is dependent on the angle at which the circle is viewed. These can be quite tricky to get right.

The important thing is to keep both sides even. Turning the paper through 90º will help you construct a more symmetrical shape.



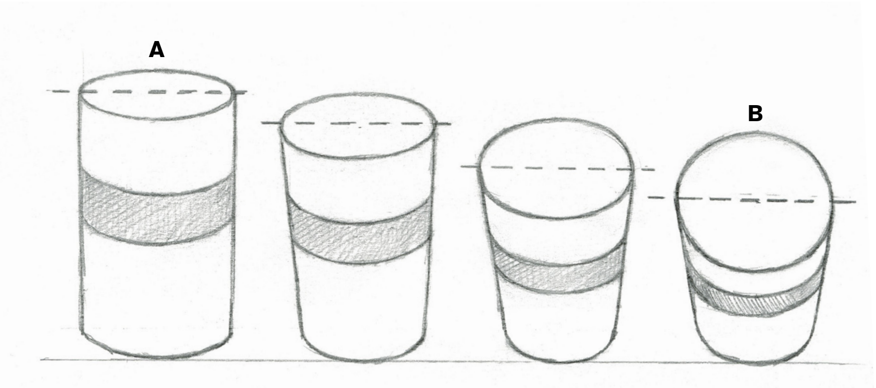
A circle from the side

The series of ellipses here shows how a flat circular disc (A) becomes progressively narrower as it turns or your viewpoint changes. Seen flat on, it is a circle, but as we move round it, the shape becomes narrower and more obviously elliptical until it is almost a horizontal line (B).



Curved all the way around

When drawing the ellipse, avoid making the sides pointed – they should be a continuous curve.



Cylinders

These drawings of a cylinder demonstrate how the shape of the top and sides changes depending on your viewpoint. Seen side-on (A), the top of the cylinder appears as an ellipse, but viewed from progressively further above, it appears more and more round, until it looks circular (B). The sides of the cylinder also become more angled in perspective.

> **Tip**
>
> *Draw a faint horizontal line through the centre of your ellipse to help check that the two sides are even.*

Jug using lines and curves

You can draw this jug using just lines and curves.

1 Start by drawing a circle in the centre of your paper.

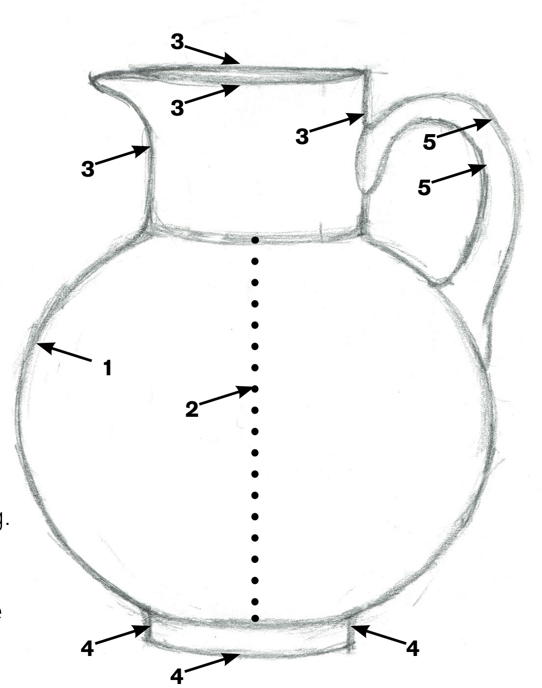
2 Draw a temporary line to find the centre (shown as a dotted line).

3 The centre line is helpful in getting the neck symmetrical. It is made up of two vertical lines, the left one curved at the top to form the lip of the jug. Draw a flattened ellipse for the top of the jug.

4 Add the foot of the jug with two short straight lines and a curve for the base.

5 Draw the handle, first plotting the points, top and base, where it joins the jug. Note that the thickness of the handle varies and its shape is not even.

Blend the edges of the shapes to create a flowing outline, then gently remove the construction lines with an eraser. There you are – a jug!

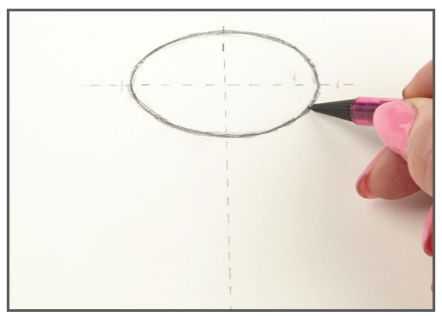


Cup and saucer

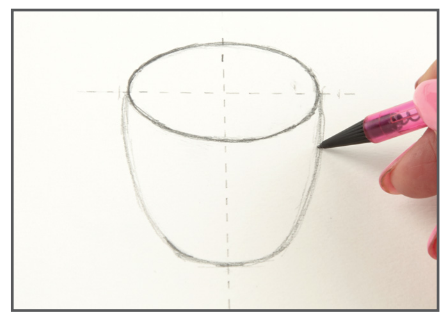
This exercise will allow you to practise drawing curved shapes. Using a propelling or clutch pencil will make things easier, as you won't have to stop and sharpen it.

Making a few light guidemarks to show the widest, lowest and highest points of the ellipses will help to get them straight, as will faint guidelines.

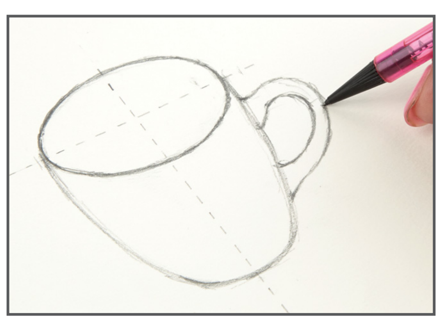
Once you have completed this exercise, place a different cup and saucer in front or you and use the techniques to draw directly from life.



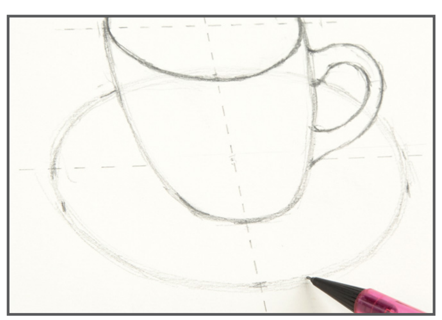
1 Draw a vertical guideline. Use a set square to help you to draw a horizontal guideline near the top of the vertical guideline, then use the guidelines to help you draw an ellipse for the top of the cup.



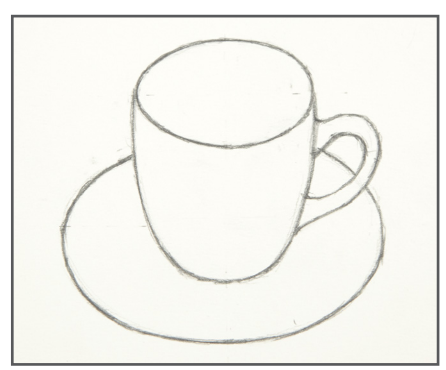
2 Draw a curve to position the base of the cup, using the vertical guideline to help you centre it correctly. Join the top to the base with more curved lines for the sides of the cup.



3 Draw the handle. Start by making marks where the top and bottom join the cup, then add curved lines. Note that the width of the handle will vary.



4 Make a second horizontal guideline to help to centre the saucer, then 'ghost in' the line of the ellipse for the saucer with a very pale line.



5 Strengthen the visible areas of the saucer, then use an eraser to remove all of the guidelines, reference marks and ghosted lines.

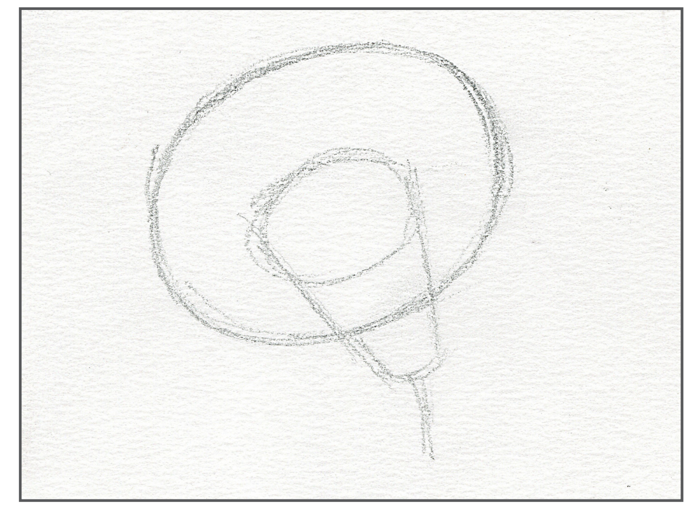
Natural shapes

It is likely that you will want to draw more naturalistic shapes than the geometric shapes we have been looking at so far, and the simple exercises on this and the following pages are a great way to try out the skills you have learned on the previous pages. These also introduce a little simple shading – something we will look in more detail at in the next chapter.

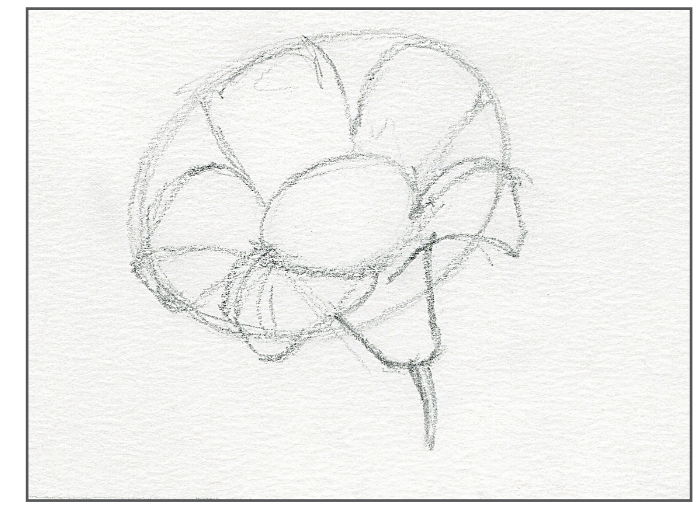
You need only the 2B, 4B and 6B graphite pencils, plus some cartridge paper and a kneadable eraser.

Small flower

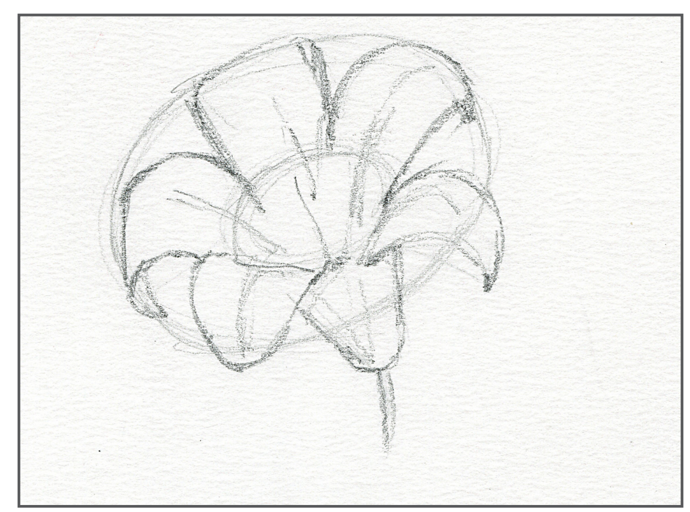
This lily can be drawn by simplifying it into basic shapes, and then building up the details.



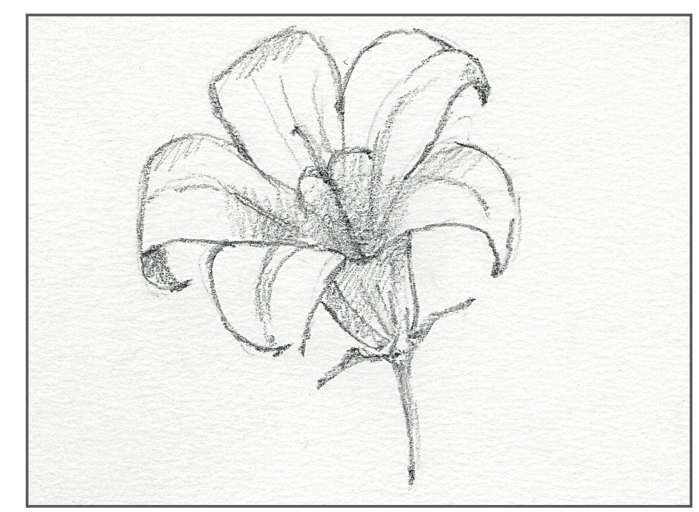
1 Use a 2B to create the basic structure of the flower by lightly drawing two off-centre ellipses, and an inverted cone for the neck and a narrow stem.



2 Lightly draw the petal shapes, their tips following the outer ellipse.



3 Add tips to the petals and the central veins to enhance the contours and direction of the petals.



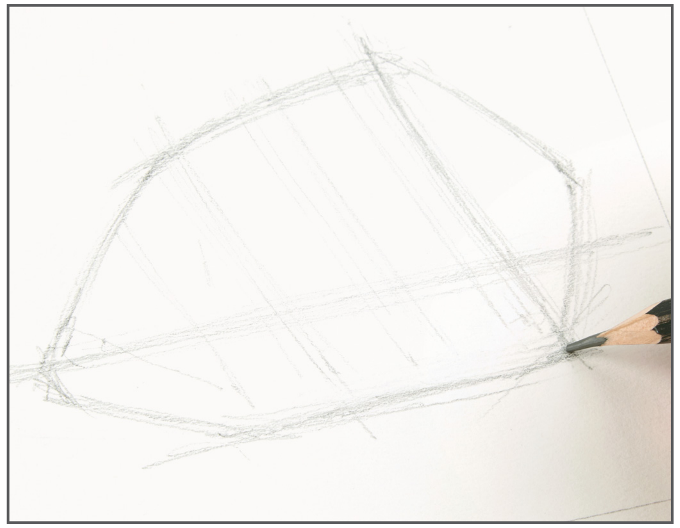
4 Draw in the stigma, then use a 4B to shade the inside of the conical part and the neck itself, adding any other details like the tiny leaves at the tip of the stem to complete the simple study.

Shell

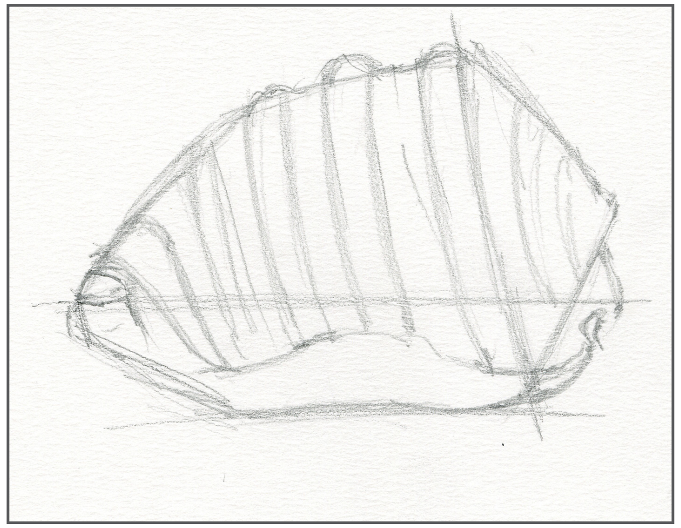
This heavily textured seashell is a simple basic shape, which makes it ideal to practise our tonal work upon – you can concentrate on getting the details just right.

Tip

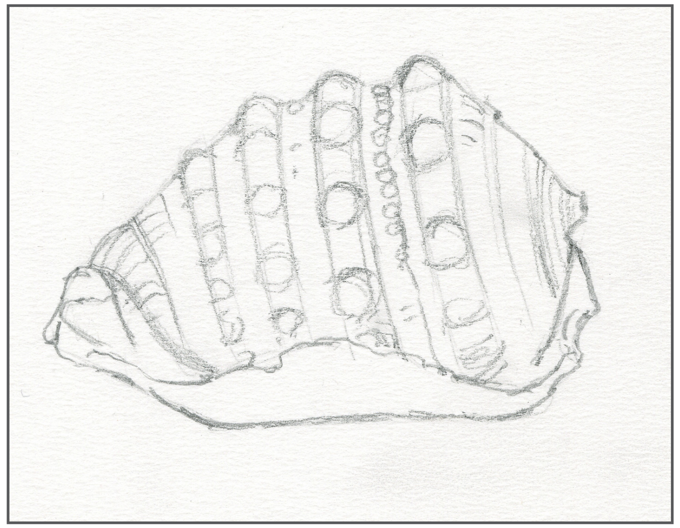
You may find it helpful to start with a horizontal line to help establish the 'nose' and the 'tail' of the shell.



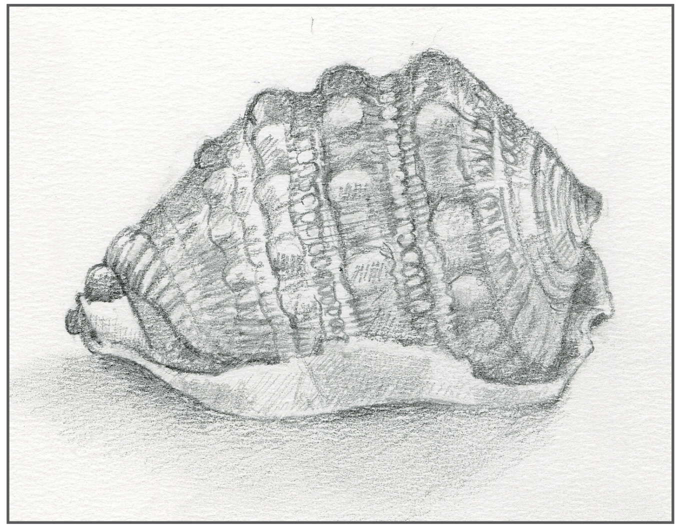
1 Use the 2B to establish a series of basic guidelines to achieve the simplified shape of the shell, then draw some diagonal lines to represent the markings. Work lightly for this underlying framework.



2 Add more detail to each end of the shell and define the rows of markings.



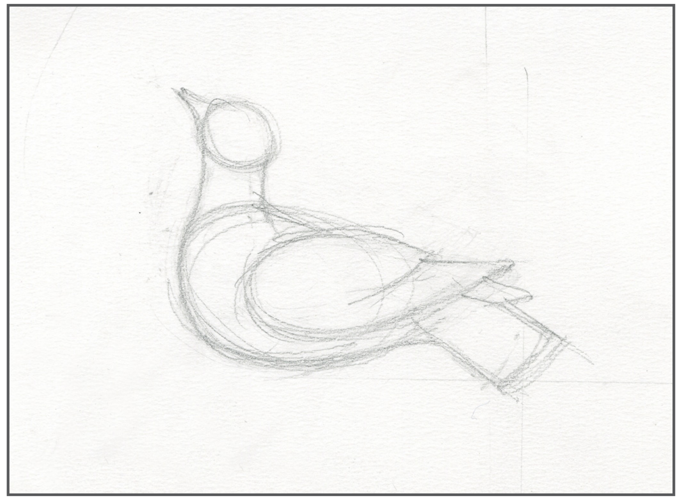
3 Sharpen the outline with more detail, then add the lumps and bumps on the shell. Concentrate on getting the shapes right at this point, working lightly with the pencil.



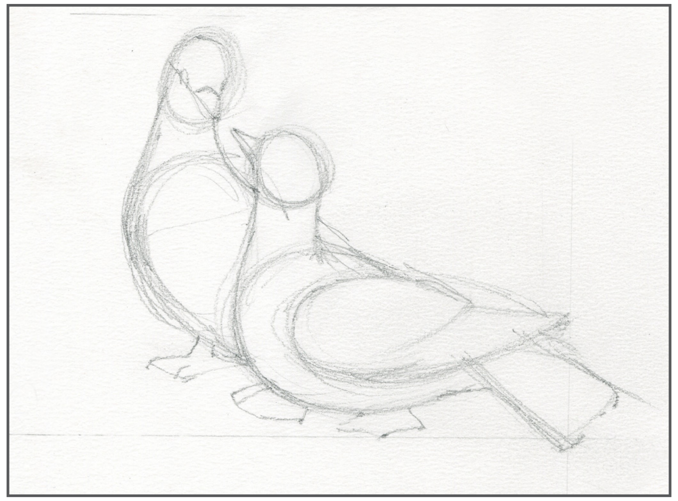
4 Build contrasting tones to make the shell look real. Darken some areas of the patterns with a sharp 4B pencil to make other parts appear more prominent, thus introducing realistic variations, replicating form and texture. Shaping the kneadable eraser to a point, lighten the areas of the bumps. To finish, add shading beneath the shell to 'ground' it, so that it appears as if it is sitting on the surface.

Doves

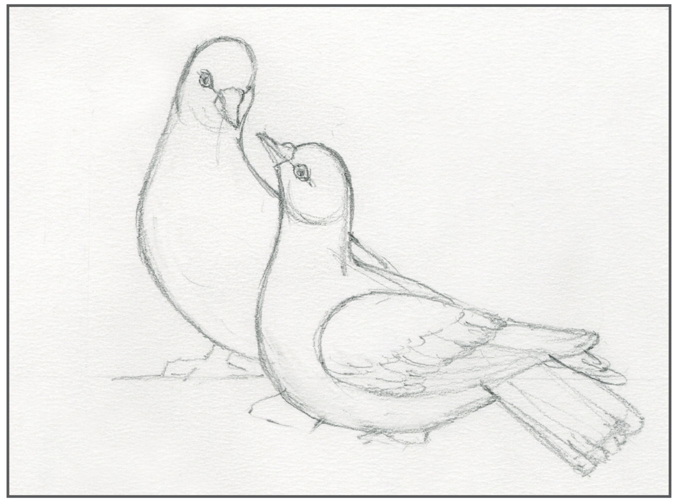
Try to move loosely to maintain flowing lines. This exercise is a chance to practise working from the shoulder and elbow – that is, moving your whole arm, rather than just your fingers and wrist – while drawing these beautiful doves.



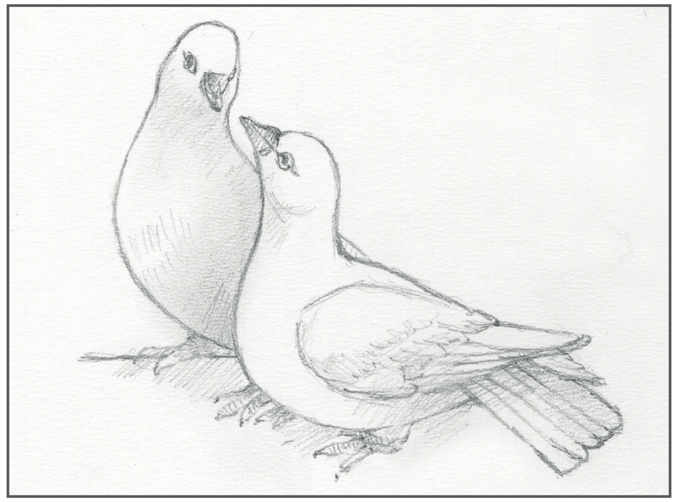
1 Start with the lower dove. Draw a small circle for the head, then the neck, and a larger flattened circle for the body, the wings and the rectangular tail, taking care to get the proportions and angles correct between one section compared with another.



2 Draw the second dove using the same method. Look at the 'negative' space between the neck of the upper dove and head and beak of the lower one to help assess the relative sizes and shapes of their heads. Also note where the curving line of the upper dove's breast meets the curve of the lower dove. Sketch in the position of their feet.



3 Add the eyes, noting that their centre line follows through to the midpoint of the beak; put in some detailing in the wings and tail. Clean up with an eraser and correct any inaccuracies.



4 Draw the feet and include more detail to the feathers. To finish, you can add shading to the second dove to separate the two birds, and also to the beaks and tail.

Tone

So far we have just looked at line artwork with some simple shading. To create a sense of three-dimensionality, we need to introduce tone. What do we mean when we talk about tones? Tones are the degree of light or dark in a scene and are vital to make something look 'real', regardless of colouring.

When trying to assess tones, it may help to imagine you have a black and white photograph of a full colour subject – what you see would be a 'tonal study'. Squinting to half-see a scene also helps, cancelling out details so the tones become more apparent.

The maxim to remember is 'dark against light, light against dark'. In other words, in order to make something look light or bright, the neighbouring tone must be darker by contrast. The reverse is also true – dark objects are best surrounded by light tones. This will generally happen throughout the drawing or painting.

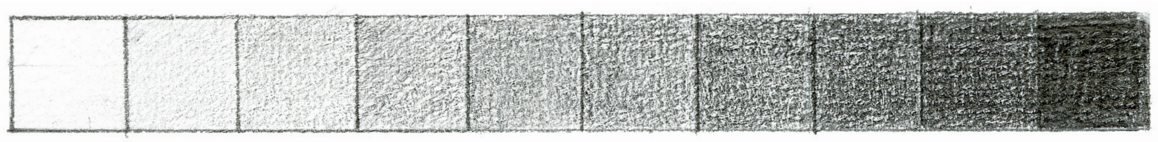
Tip

You can also take a picture with your phone or camera and change the image to 'tonal' so you can view the contrast more clearly.

The tonal scale

The tonal scale is a useful drawing device that will help you to identify the degree of light or dark in any area of a subject or drawing. Numbering the tones from 1 (white) to 10 (black) makes it easier to allocate the correct tonal value to each part of your drawing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



To create a tonal scale for your reference, draw a long thin rectangle and divide it into ten equal squares. Leave the first square as clean white paper. Using a 2B pencil very lightly, make the second square a very pale grey, the third slightly darker and so on; by the eighth you may wish to switch to a 4B pencil for the darker tones, finishing with using a 6B to create a black in the final square.

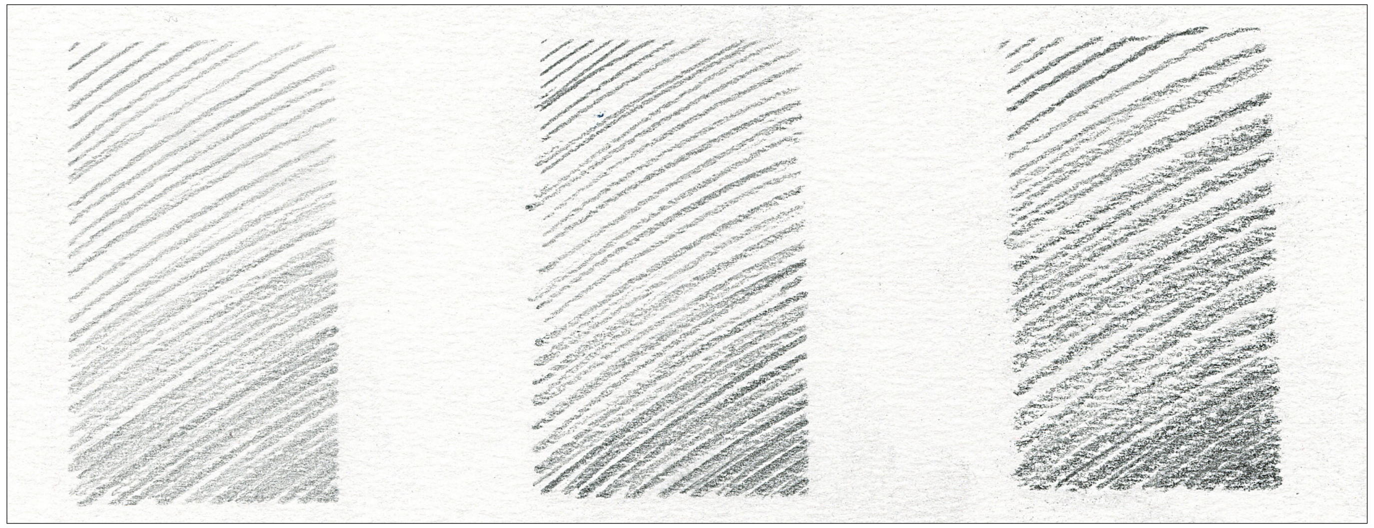
Tip

You may also like to create tonal scales using your other drawing materials, such as pen and charcoal.

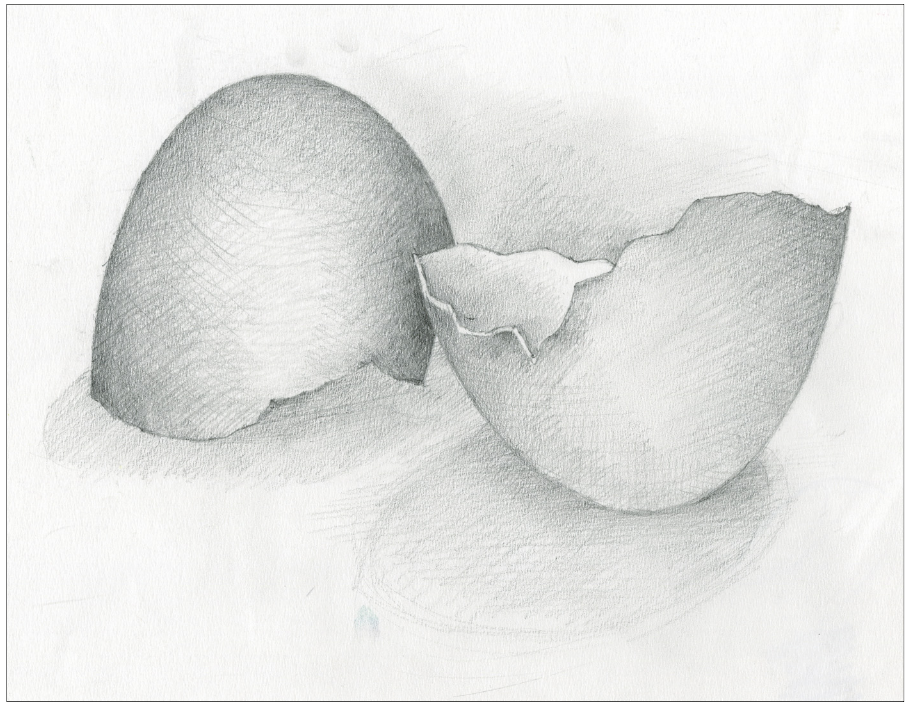
Creating tones with a pencil

The tone a pencil makes can be varied by changing the pressure you apply. More pressure will result in a stronger, darker tone – just like we saw in the very first line exercise on page 10.

A variety of tones can also be created by using different grades of pencil. The pencil drawings in this book are created with 2B, 4B and 6B pencils. The blacker the grade, the more it can be smudged. My preference is to start with a 2B, then use a softer, blacker 4B or 6B pencil for a darker tone.



HB 2B 6B



Egg shells

Practise creating a range of tones by drawing something simple like some egg shells. Once you have completed the outline, decide where the lightest and darkest areas are, before you start to add shading. Remember: screw up your eyes to distinguish where the lights and darks appear, and if necessary enhance them a little to create more contrast.



Horses in the Camargue

Starting with a 2B pencil I sketched in the position of the horses, before working up the detailing in their head and manes. I used a 4B pencil to add some darker tones and found it useful to smudge in with my finger before using the electric eraser to lift out the white spots and foam of the water splashes.



Cottage Doorway, Guilden Morden

This drawing, created with 2B and 4B pencils on cartridge paper, demonstrates the full tonal scale from the white roses around the door and the eaves of the porch to the black windows and door elements. When working from photographs, the lights can appear lighter and the shadows darker than you would see with the naked eye, so it is sometimes necessary to exaggerate certain areas whilst playing down others to make the drawing or painting work.

Pens

Traditionally, artists such as Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1699) used a quill and ink. Later this was superseded by a metal nib fixed into a wooden shaft. Even a stick picked from the hedgerow can be dipped into a bottle of ink to produce random lines and a wide range of interesting, if somewhat haphazard, marks. Although these drawing instruments produce lines full of character and varying thicknesses, using them can be messy and hazardous, particularly if you are working outdoors.

The pen drawings in this book have been produced using a variety of pens. Fineliner pens produce lines of a particular width, usually measured in parts of a millimetre – e.g. 0.1, 0.3. The smaller the number, the finer the line. Brush pens have a large, brush-like tip, which can create a variety of marks and line widths. Dip pens are shaped wooden shafts into which a nib is inserted. The nibs, which are available in different shapes and sizes, produce lines of varying thickness; giving character and interest to any drawing. The flipside is that they can be messy and therefore not suitable for outside work. In contrast, ballpoint pens are clean to use and yield controlled, regular marks.



Left to right: 0.7mm fineliner pen; brush pen; 0.5mm and 0.3mm fineliner pens; ballpoint pen.

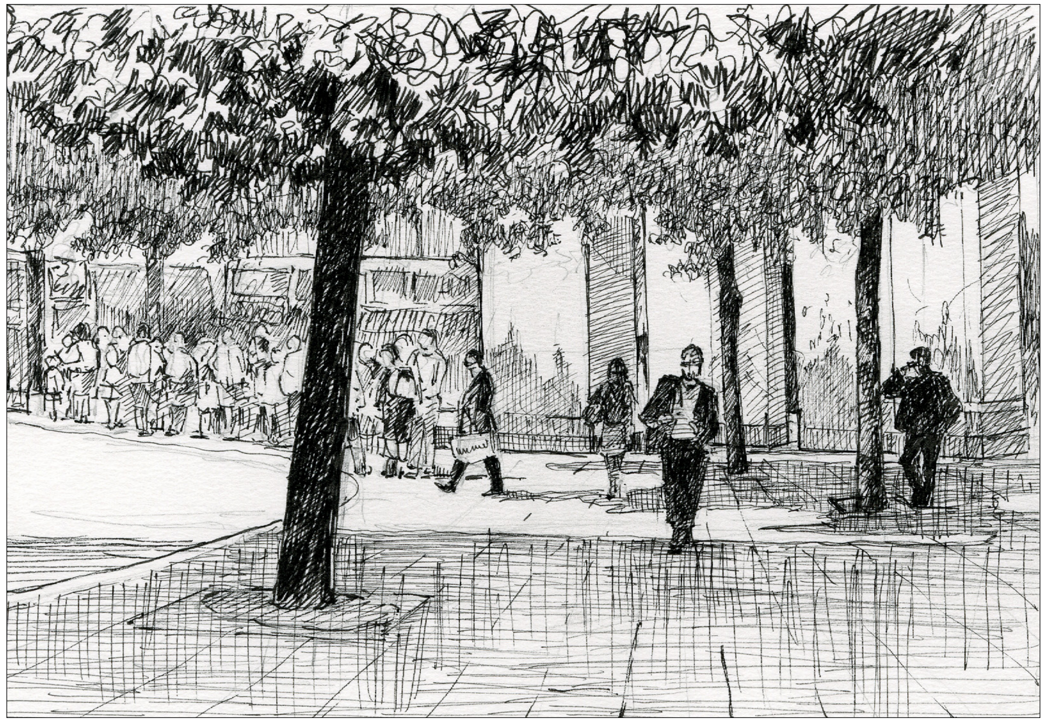


Traditional dip pens (and sticks!) need to be loaded from a bottle of ink – different nibs will hold more or less ink and produce different marks, so experiment before committing to their use.

Using pens

Pen, unlike pencil, cannot easily be erased, so it is vital to draw the foreground first. If necessary, lightly sketch out the composition in pencil before committing to ink. However, try to avoid going over the pencil lines too precisely as this can make the drawing look dull and laboured.

The type of marks you make will be in response to the subject matter. Use a variety, trying to make them lively and stimulating whilst still accurately describing the object they are depicting.



City Life, London

0.3mm, 0.5mm and 0.7mm fineliners were used for this scene.

Creating tone with pens

As a general rule, pens cannot create the subtle variations of pressure and tone that a pencil can. For this reason it is necessary to pay more attention to the actual marks, building up tone and texture with a greater variety of techniques than with pencils.



Breton Clogs

The pile of clogs, spotted in a Breton market, were drawn using an ordinary blue ballpoint pen. Because it is something one uses frequently, and not a 'special' drawing implement, it feels quite friendly and familiar as well as flowing over the paper effortlessly. I used hatching and cross-hatching (see pages 24–25) to build up the lights and darks. In places, the lines follow the planes on the carved wooden contours, adding to their shape.



Betty's Vase

The vase was drawn with a back water-soluble ink pen. By wetting the black pen lines here and there, while leaving white spaces, I was able to recreate the shiny reflective glass finish and its shadow. Using water-soluble pens takes a bit of practice as it is easy to overdo the effect, but do try them as they are great fun!



Winter Tree

This drawing was an exercise in looking at negative spaces – I was aiming to capture the contrast between the branches, the tree and the background. I started by defining the intertwining branches and the few remaining leaves with the fineliner pen, which was ideal for this detailing. I then added the shape of the trunk between the branches and darkened the spaces in between (the negative spaces). It was a cold day for drawing outside and consequently it was a quite a quick study!

Shading

Shading is essentially a process of adding dark tones to help describe shape and form. There are a number of different ways to produce shading. The following pages explain four of them, with short exercises for you to follow.



Hatching example

Note the variation in tone – light-toned areas are left unhatched, and the interwoven feathered area appears darker in tone.

Hatching

Hatching is a way of creating tone by making a series of parallel lines, often diagonal. Making the lines closer will produce a darker tone. To cover a large area, the lines can be interwoven, called 'feathering'.

As I am right-handed, I naturally work from left to right but if you are left-handed you may find it easier to work right to left.

Hatched apple

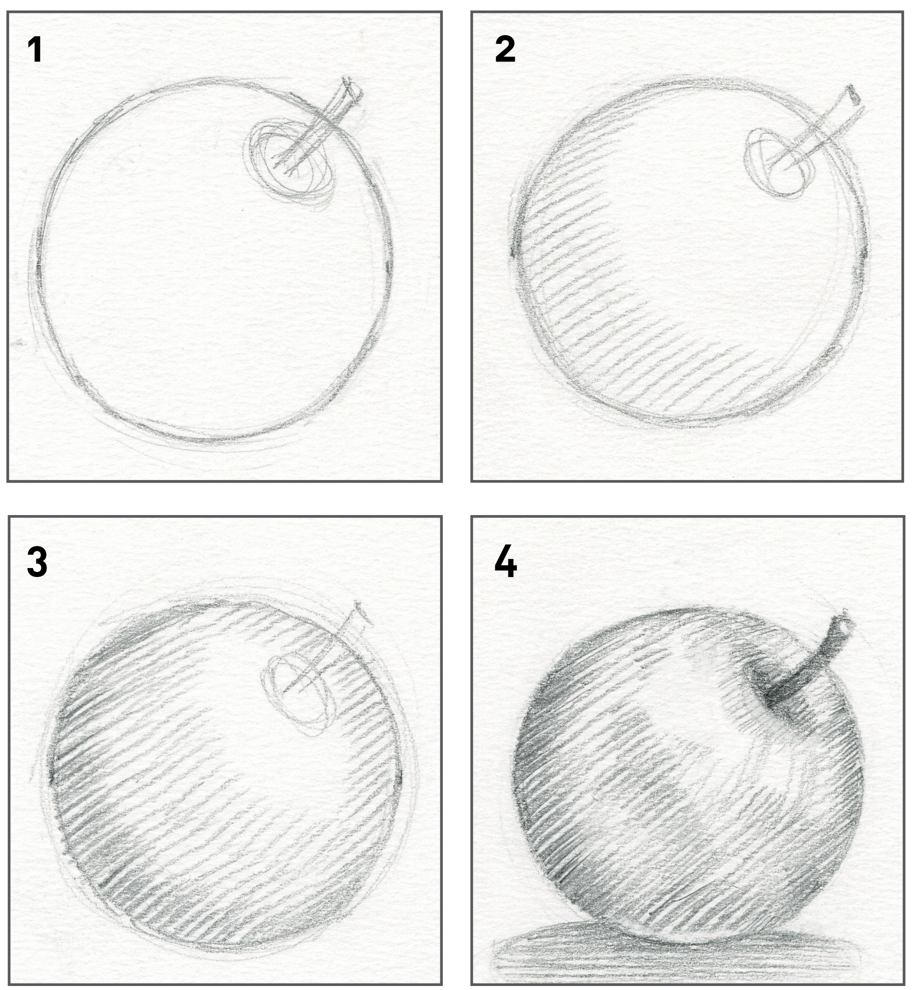
You will need a 2B pencil and cartridge paper for this exercise in hatching.

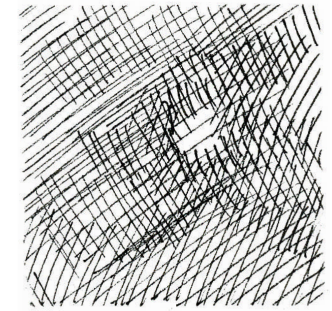
1 Draw a circular shape to represent the apple; add the stalk and the recess around it.

2 Working from the outline, add some hatching as shown, lifting the pencil off at the end of the stroke.

3 Build up another layer of hatching lines.

4 Overlay with more hatching, pressing harder at the left side to create a darker tone. Darken the stalk and the recess. If you have overdone the hatching, you can erase an area to produce a highlight.





Cross-hatching example

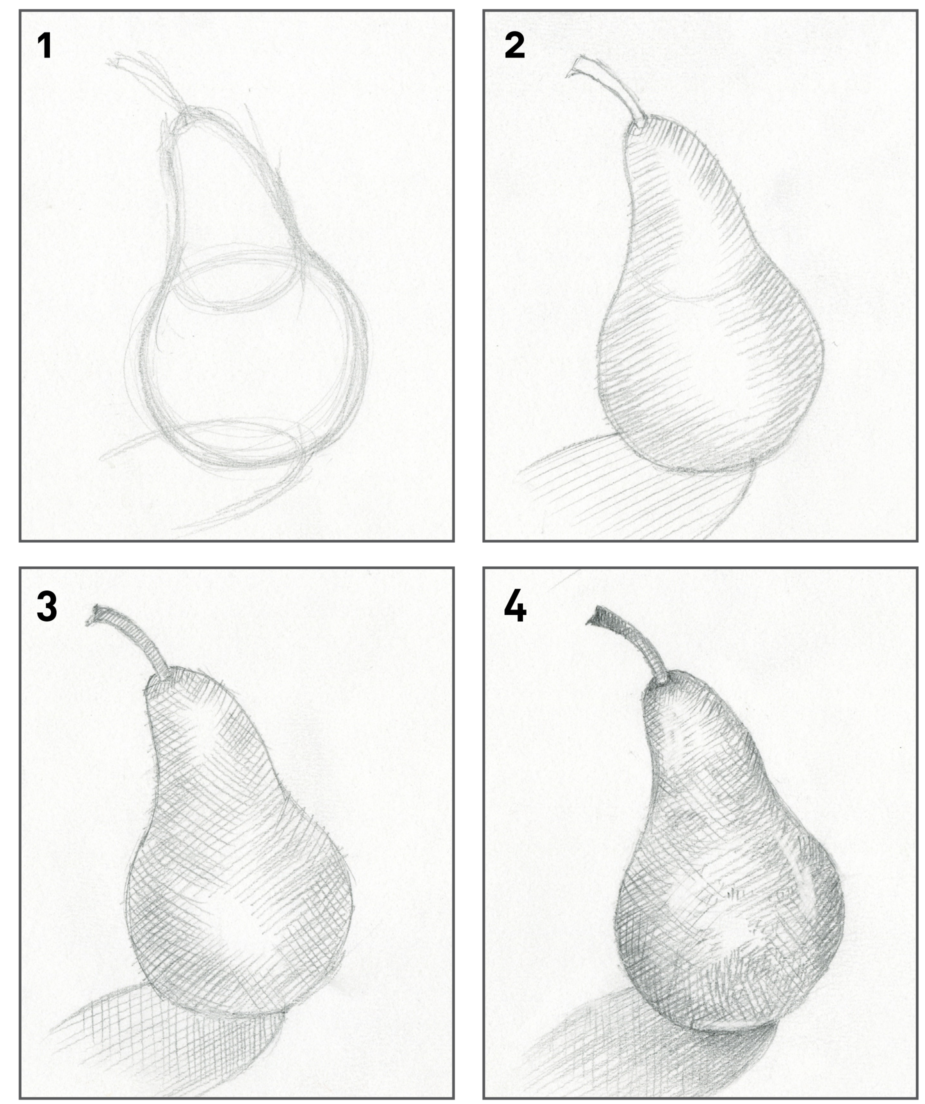
In this example, note that I have created a 'hole' simply by leaving a gap in a cross-hatched area.

Cross-hatching

Cross-hatching is a method of creating tone through multiple layers of hatching – typical two or three layers. Each layer of hatching is worked at a different angle to the others. There is no definitive rule for the direction of the subsequent layers; sometimes they will follow the direction or shape of the object you are shading – horizontal for a flat surface, curved for a round surface.

Cross-hatched pear

As with the apple exercise opposite, you will need a 2B pencil and cartridge paper for this simple exercise. Here we look at how cross-hatching can be used for shading.



1 Lightly draw the rough outline of the pear – a circular body topped with a rounded cone, plus its elliptical shadow.

2 Add some hatching; starting from the outer edge apply more pressure at the start of the stroke, lifting off at the end. Add hatching to the shadow too.

3 Now cross-hatch, darkening the tone at the edges of the pear to create a three-dimensional effect. Do the same for the shadow and the stalk.

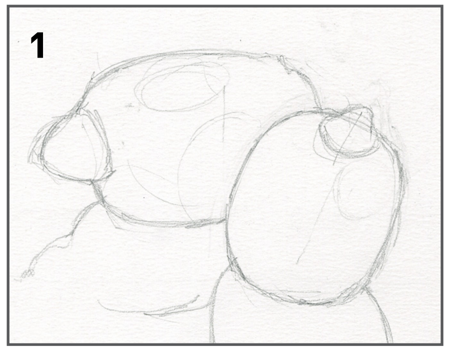
4 To complete, increase the tones at the outer edges and add a few hatching lines to create the blotchy skin of the pear. Darken the front area of the shadow and with a kneadable eraser squeezed to a fine point lift off a reflected highlight on the base of the fruit. This helps to separate it from its shadow and creates depth and the illusion of a three-dimensional form.



Stippling

Stippling is shading built up through a series of dots. Creating more dots in a small area will generate darker tones. Sparse dots will produce a very light tone.

This technique is best used where you want to produce a subtly shaded effect, such as clouds in a sky, or soft shading on a delicate surface. This technique lends itself well to pen, as the consistent size of the mark and tone of the ink help to enhance the effect.







Stippled lemons

In addition to a 2B pencil and cartridge paper for this exercise in hatching, you will need a 0.3mm fineliner pen.

1 Draw the lemons lightly with a 2B pencil to establish their forms.

2 Using the pen, dot in the outlines, then add lots more dots to darken the edges. You may feel a bit like a woodpecker!

3 Add shadows, but leave the base of the lemon paler so that it does not disappear into the shadow.

4 Dot in the tones in the front lemon, creating soft striations to show the textured surface. Put in its shadow, darker nearer the base of the fruit. Enhance the details where necessary in both lemons and to finish, erase the initial pencil lines after the ink is completely dry.

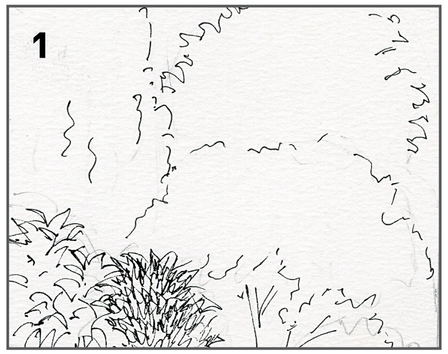




Scribbling

This shading technique, achieved with semi-random movement of the pen or pencil, is ideal for foliage, animal hair, a woolly fabric or to introduce an alternative texture into a drawing. It works very well alongside or over other shading techniques.

The size of the scribble you will need depends on the application and size of drawing. The more scribbles, the darker the effect.









Scribbled garden border

This exercise uses cartridge paper, plus 0.1mm and 0.3mm fineliners.

1 Using an 0.1mm fineliner pen, draw the outline of the plants and shrubs adding some fine scribbled lines to simulate the different types of foliage in the foreground.

2 Switching to an 0.3mm pen, begin to scribble in the right-hand shrub.

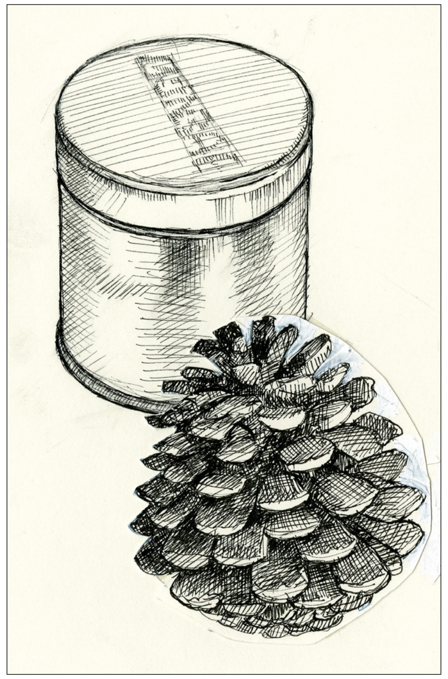
3 Do the same for the taller shrub behind, changing the marks to simulate the foliage, then move left to tackle the conifer tree whose leaves have a vertical growth pattern. Darken the area between the shrubs by intensifying the scribbles.

4 Now darken the area under the right-hand front shrub and at the side of the taller bush. Hatch in a simple background to finish.

Combining marks

The studies on these pages demonstrate how a wide variety of pen marks can be used to achieve different textures. Hatching and contour shading – that is, drawing shading lines that follow the curve of the object to emphasise its shape – were used for the shiny surface of the tin and fine cross-hatching for the rough, woody texture of the pine cone in the study to the right.

For the still life below, I have used a variety of pen marks including hatching, cross-hatching and stippling. I have varied the marks to suit each object, considering its shape and texture: contour shading on the large jug, for example, but stippling on the pears, a combination of the two techniques on the orange and the smaller jug, and curving lines on the horse chestnuts. Rather than outline the orange, I used the marks and tonal contrast alone to delineate it from the objects behind it, thus creating more visual interest.



Tin and Pine Cone

Produced using 0.1mm and 0.3mm fineliner pens.

Still Life

I drew this still life lightly in pencil to establish the size and relative positions of the objects before working over them with a 0.3mm brown fineliner pen.



Coat hanging over chair

Outline 1

This exercise will help you practise various shading techniques to build up tone on a complex shape.

You will need

0.3mm fineliner pen

Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)

1 Follow the steps on pages 126–127 to transfer the outline of the coat and chair onto the layout.

2 Use the fineliner pen to add hatching and cross-hatching on the struts of the chair back, then add more cross-hatching to build up a mid-tone.

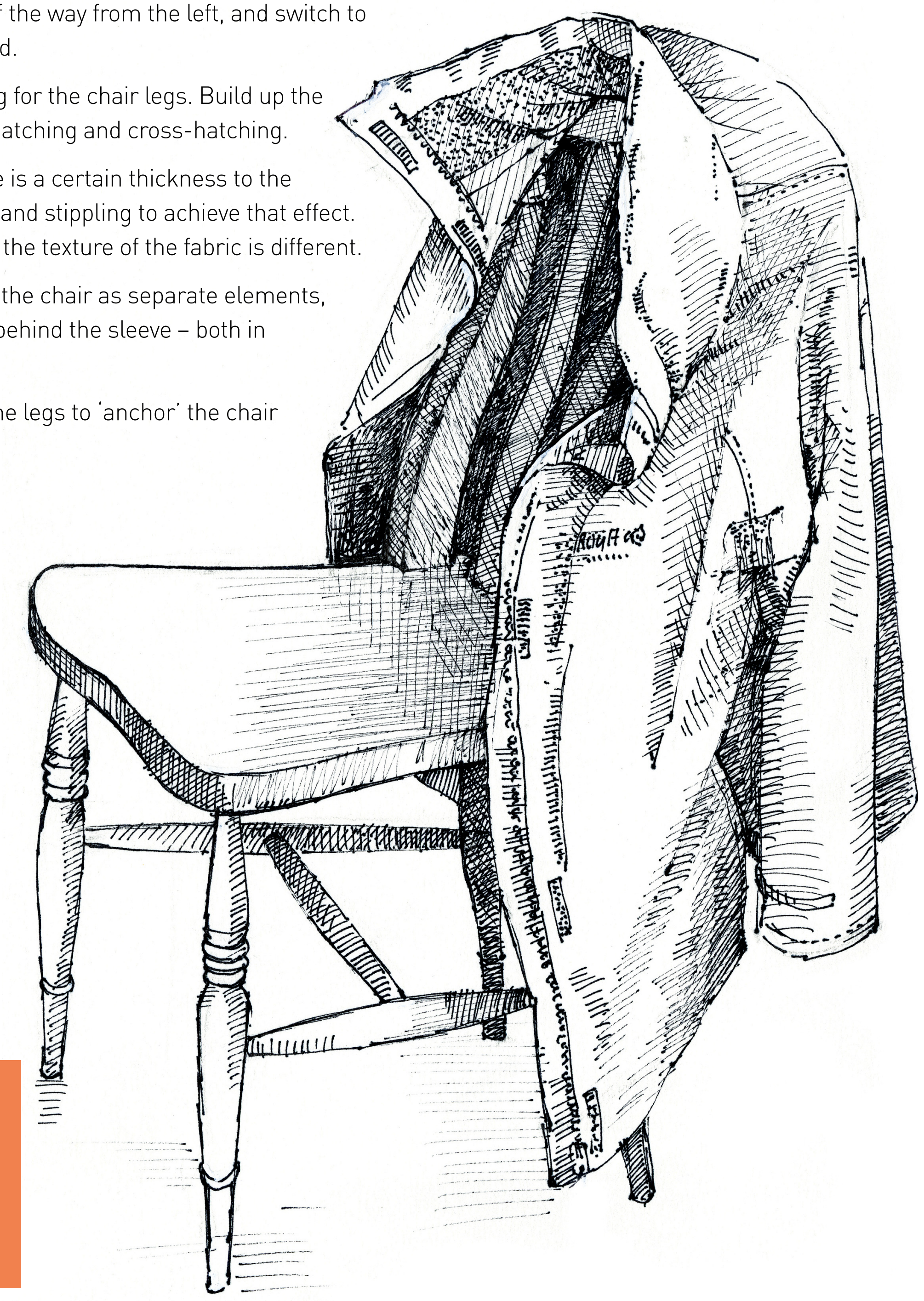
3 For the seat, leave the left-hand side clean. Start to add horizontal lines for the flat surface about one-third of the way from the left, and switch to cross-hatching for the rightmost third.

4 Use diagonal or rounded hatching for the chair legs. Build up the darker tones with a second layer of hatching and cross-hatching.

5 The coat is partly padded so there is a certain thickness to the collar. Replicate this with short lines and stippling to achieve that effect. Stipple the inside of the collar where the texture of the fabric is different.

6 Having shaded both the coat and the chair as separate elements, darken the chair back, and the area behind the sleeve – both in deeper shadow.

7 Finally, add light shading under the legs to 'anchor' the chair on the ground.



Tip

Once you have completed this project, try transferring the outline on to another piece of paper and repeating the process with some of the other shading techniques in this section, or a different drawing medium.

Light and shadow

Whether natural or artificial, the source and direction of the light can considerably change the appearance as well as the shape of an object or objects it illuminates.

A scene or object can be dramatic or lacklustre, prominent or obscure, subtle or obvious, according to the light and shadow upon it, so these are important factors to consider.

Sometimes the way the light transforms a landscape or interior can be a source of inspiration. You might like to look at paintings of well-known artists and analyse the light source and its effect on the composition as a whole. Artists such as J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) captured the luminescence of the sun on a misty morning across the sea, for example, and Joseph Wright of Derby's (1734–1797) candlelit figures are quite magical.

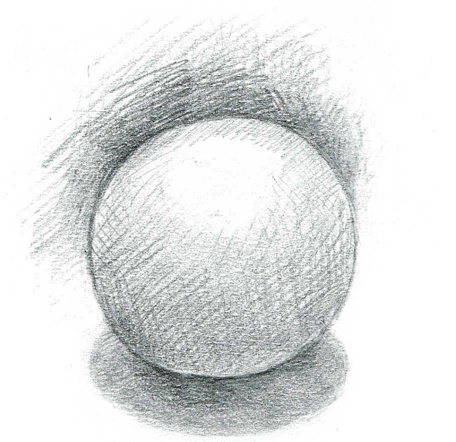
Shadows

A shadow is formed when an opaque or translucent object blocks the light source. Shadows vary in intensity depending on how near and how powerful the light source is; the wider the light source, the more blurred the shadow becomes. A diffuse lighting will produce softer, indistinct shadows, so that, for example, on an overcast day few visible cast shadows will be seen.

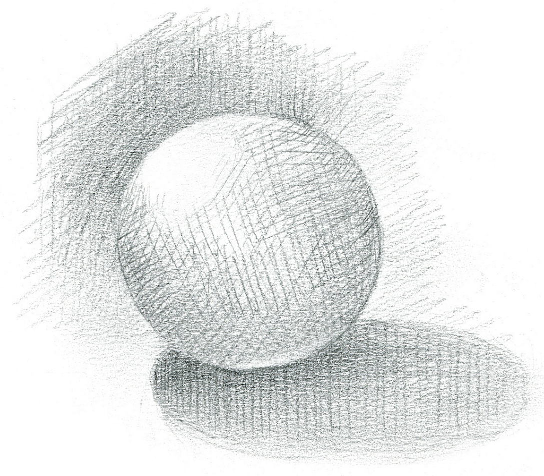
The shape of the shadow will be an elongated or a distorted version of the object from which it is cast, according to the contours of the surface it falls across. It can also be in perspective on a flat surface.

The shadow cast from an object is dependent on the position of the light source whether it is natural daylight, moonlight or an artificial light source.

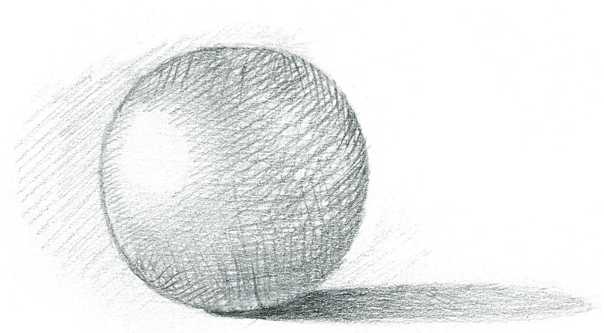
In bright sunlight we see very sharply defined shadows whereas on a dull day the shadows will be soft and almost indistinct. If you are making studies outdoors in bright sunlight it is important to remember how quickly the position of the shadows will change as the sun moves overhead.



The light source is directly overhead; the shadow forms a symmetrical ellipse.



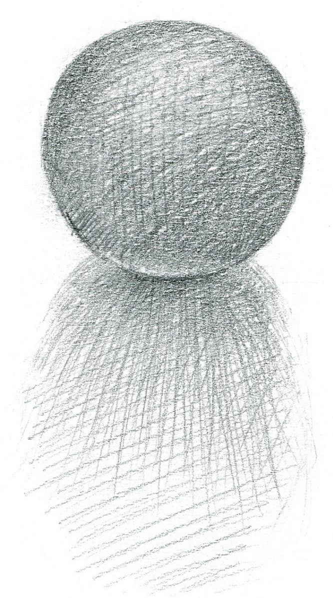
Here the light source is higher and to the left, with the cast shadow falling to the right.



The light source is low down, to the left; a highlight on the sphere close to the light, with the cast shadow forming a slim, off-centre ellipse off to the right.

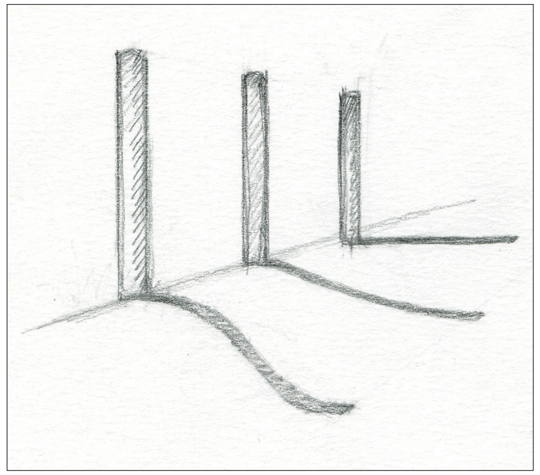
Contre-jour

Contre-jour *is a term that means 'against the daylight' – in other words, the image is composed with the viewer looking directly into the light source. Here, the sphere is nearly in silhouette, with its cast shadow quite long as the light source is low.*



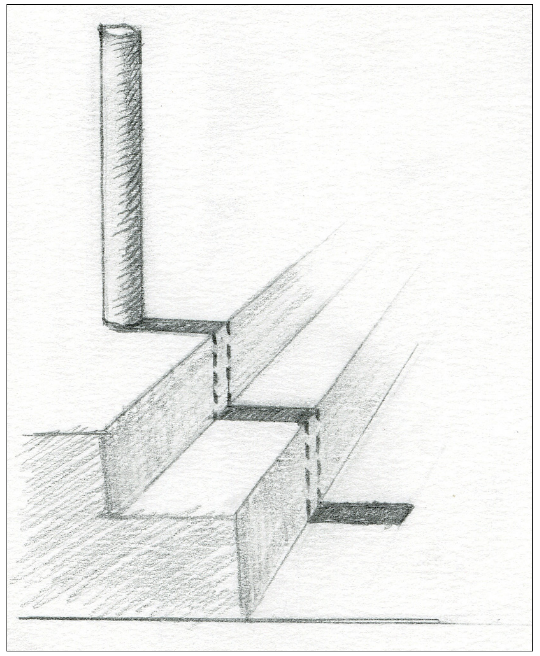
Shadows on complex shapes

As the examples on this page show, shadows follow the contours of the surfaces they fall across, thus enhancing the visual story. Whether you are drawing an undulating surface, a flight of steps, or the petals of a flower in bright sunlight, shadows can be a powerful tool to add depth, realism and breathe life into your drawing.



Posts 1

The shadows cast here describe the undulating surface of the ground, which is otherwise impossible to perceive, as the paper has been left white.



Posts 2

In this example, the dark cast shadow is broken between the steps – note that there is no shadow cast on the shaded parts of the steps. The path such a shadow would take is marked here with dotted lines for clarity, but there is no difference in tone on the surface.



Flowers

The shadows on these flowers are quite complex but if you observe them carefully, you will see that they all follow the natural pattern of the petals and vary in intensity.

Still life: figurine and lamp

In this drawing, the lamp casts a soft light over this scene, giving great opportunities for shading. There are some bright, shiny highlights across the neck, bust and legs of the pottery figurine. Her head and the cards contrast strongly against the light flooding across the background.

If you prefer to jump straight to the shading, or have completed the project and want to try out some different shading techniques, you can transfer the outline using one of the techniques on pages 126–127.

You will need

- 2B pencil
- Black ballpoint pen
- Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
- Eraser

Outline 2



1 Starting with the figurine, use the 2B pencil to create the initial drawing, adding guidelines to check the slope of the shoulders and hips and to assess the relative position of the neck to the thigh.



2 Redraw the figure using a black ballpoint pen, altering and improving where necessary, then erase the pencil drawing. Add the cards and the line of the wall behind the figure.



3 Draw in the lamp, some detail in the cards and the line of the shelf. Add some hatching to the lamp.



The finished drawing

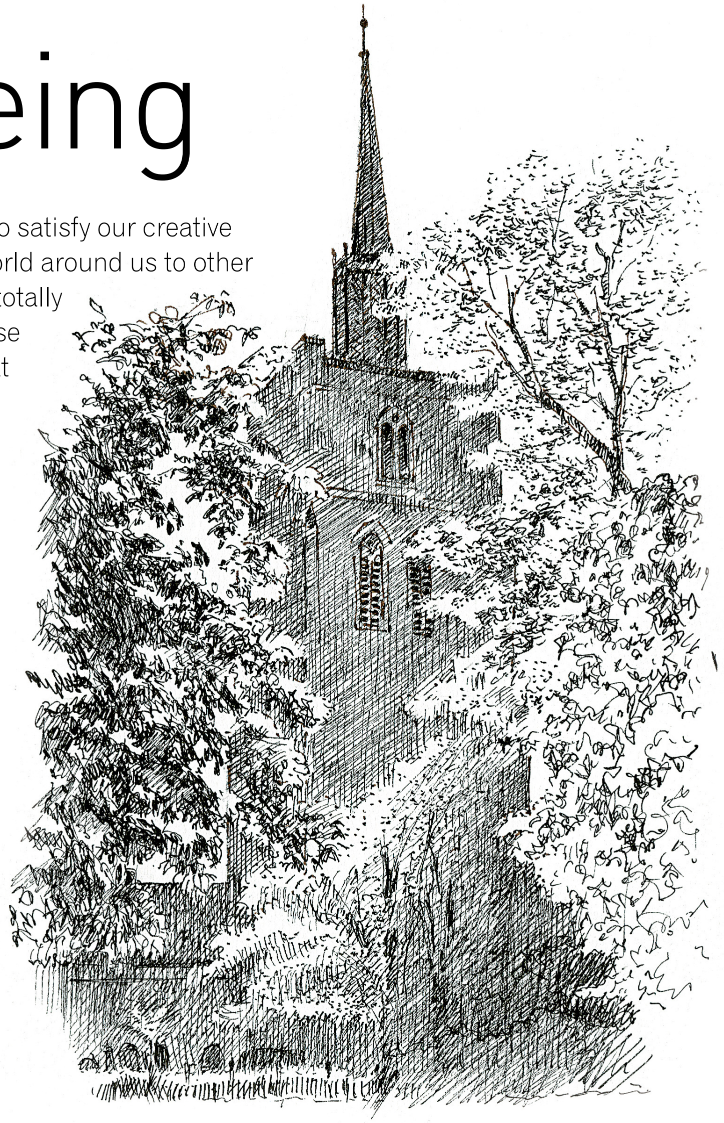
4 The final stage is to add shading across the rest of the drawing, starting with the figurine, then the cards and lamp, and finally indicating the shadow on the wall. Pause to assess the drawing, and add more tonal contrast to get the effect of the lamp light.

Ways of seeing

Why do artists draw and paint? Part of what we do is to satisfy our creative urge; the other is to communicate our vision of the world around us to other people. I think it is safe to say that hardly any artist is totally satisfied with what they produce, but when they choose a subject or a scene to depict, it's the 'wow' factor that inspires them, and this will differ for each individual.

For some the 'wow' factor may be the light filtering through spring foliage, children playing on the beach, sunrise over the mountains or a vase of lilies. It is whatever each person finds inspiring – one's unique and specific vision. These pages show examples of scenes that, for me, have the 'wow' factor.

This section explores different ways of looking at the world around you, in order to make even complex scenes and objects more approachable for you to draw, and to give you the tools to draw anything that inspires you.



Ashwell Church

The appeal of this subject was the effect of sunlight sparkling through the foliage of trees in springtime. The light source is behind the church, which is consequently nearly in silhouette. I used pen work to build up the texture of the trees by scribbling and stippling, being careful to leave sufficient white paper to create the impact of this contre-jour *study.*

Drawing in the Churchyard

In this contre-jour *pencil drawing, the headstone, tree and seated figure in the foreground are dark against a light background. There is an interesting play of shadows across the grass. Note also that the nearest headstone is lighter than the tree and other headstones.*



Tip

Whatever you are drawing, if your work appears odd in some way that you can't quite identify, try turning it upside down. The unfamiliarity can often help you identify what is wrong so that you can fix it.

Counterbalance

My maxim of 'light against dark, dark against light' translates into the general term of 'counterbalance' or 'counterpoint'. This is illustrated in this study of two figures at a country fair. The old man's jacket is light against the mid-toned background, but darker on the shaded side. The barrier is dark against the jacket, yet light against the girl's legs. His stick is dark at the top and light towards the base. Counterbalance can be found everywhere you look and is a very effective way of suggesting three dimensions and creating interest.



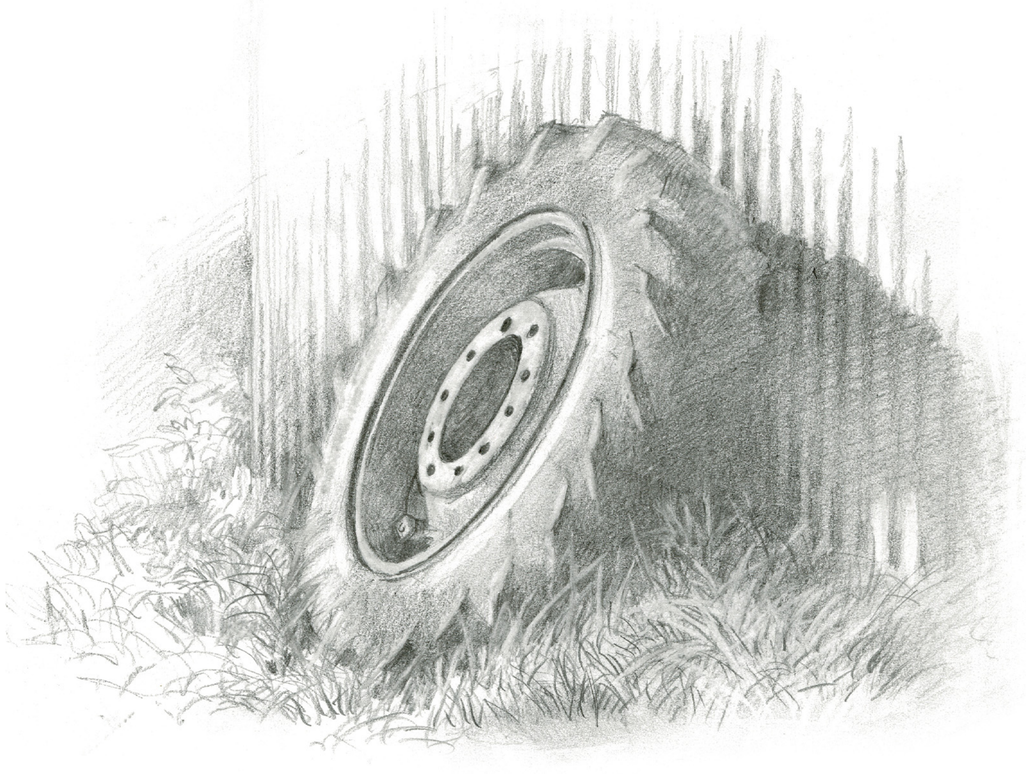
Le Festival du Pain

Charcoal.

Lost and found

In reality, there are no lines around an object. What we actually see is one shape or tone against another, depicted on paper as an outline. However, sometimes the tones between two objects are equal and we cannot see a distinctive edge. We term this as a lost edge, and those that are more distinctive are found edges.

In this drawing, the right-hand side of the tractor tyre is 'lost' in the shadow, but because we can see the shape of the rest of the tyre, subconsciously we 'read' the lost edge.

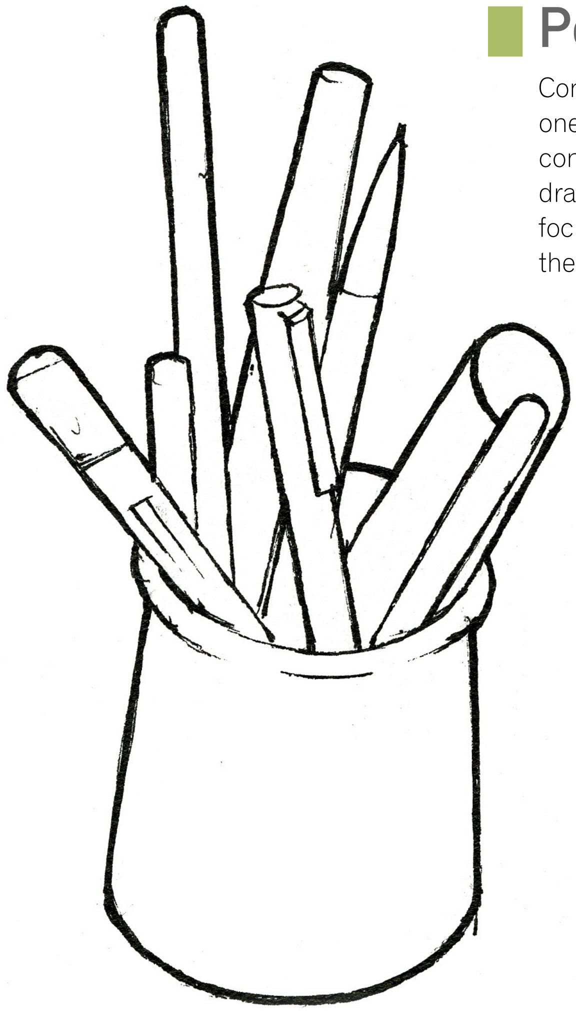


Old Tractor Tyre

Pencil.

Positive and negative shapes

Concentrating on the shapes between – and the spaces around –objects is one approach of helping us to accurately draw the object itself. Without being conscious of it, the brain often dictates what we see, so it is essential to try to draw what we see and not what we think we see. In the examples below I have focused on these 'negative spaces' to improve the accuracy of representing the objects themselves.



Studio pot

Drawing familiar objects can be more complicated than one thinks. Concentrating on the many triangular spaces between the pens, pencils and drawing implements in the pot on my desk, I was able to draw it more precisely, instead of focussing on the objects themselves. I have overemphasised the negative shapes by outlining them.



Sunflowers

As well as drawing the flower heads, paying attention to the spaces between the petals, the leaves and the abstract shapes between the stalks all helped to achieve an accurate rendition of this evocative vase of flowers.

Negative shapes – upside-down stool

This unfamiliar view of an everyday object helps us to see it as a group of abstract shapes rather as a preconceived idea of the stool. The aim is to use the negative spaces – the gaps between the legs, the shapes formed by the seat, the spaces between the struts and so forth – to help draw the object.

Hold your pad up so that you can see the stool without looking away to draw, and keep your head and the paper steady as you draw, as even a small movement can alter the appearance of the negative shapes considerably.

You will need

2B and 4B graphite pencils
Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
Eraser

1 Find the left-most part of the stool – in this case, the rear left-hand leg. Using a 2B pencil, lightly draw the inside line of the leg onto the paper.

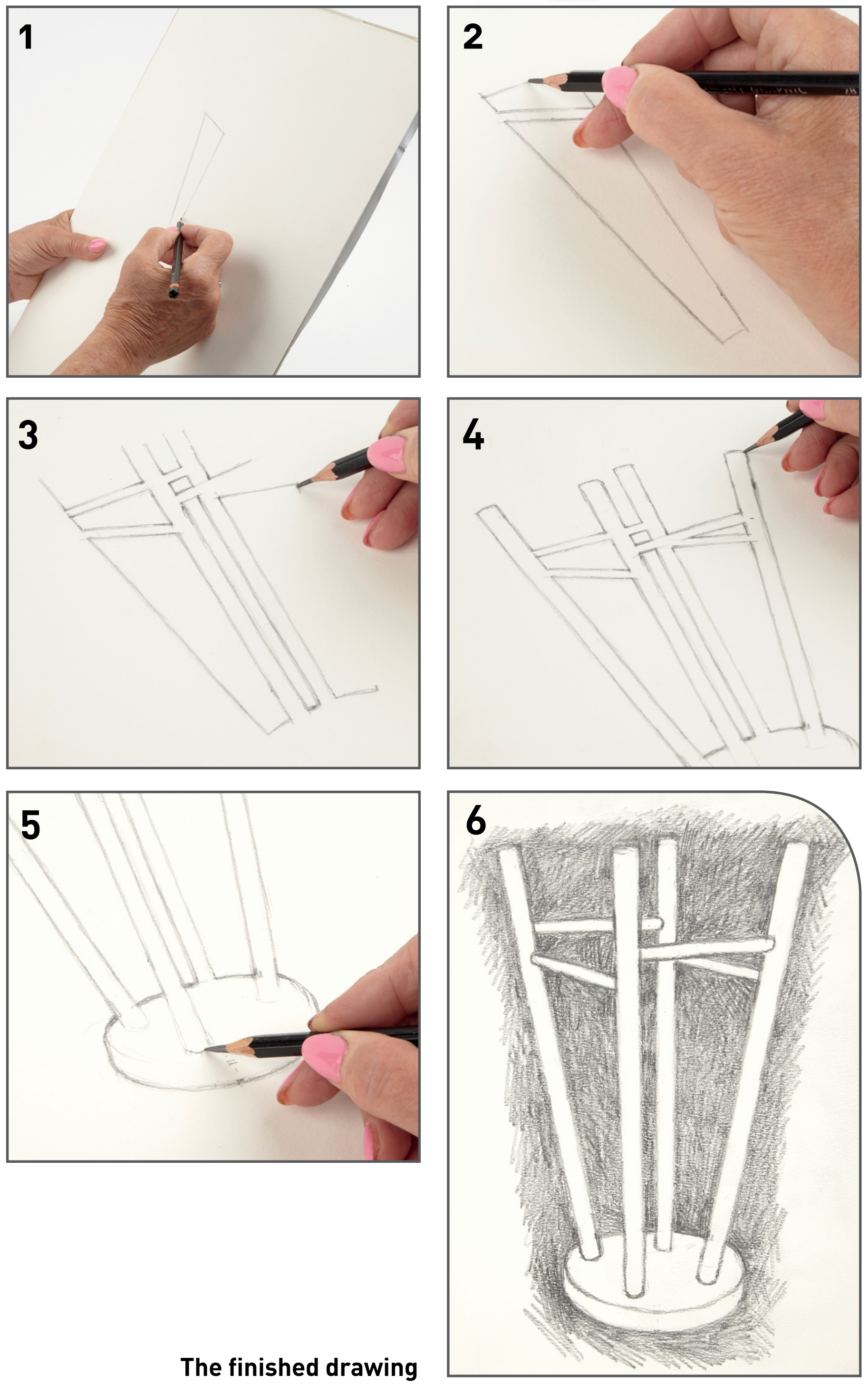
2 Using this line as reference, follow the adjoining legs and supports around to draw a solid shape. This is the 'negative shape' created by the parts of the stool that surround the gap. Ignore the ends of the legs for now – just let the lines end.

3 Ignoring the legs and supports themselves, continue to draw the shapes of the gaps between them. Look carefully at the angles involved, and use the negative shape already on the paper to help you place the other negative shapes correctly.

4 Once you have drawn all of the negative shapes within the stool, return to the legs, and cap them off by getting the lengths correct and drawing the ends.

5 There are no internal negative shapes to help guide you in drawing the seat. Feel free to draw some faint lines to show where the legs meet it.

6 Change to a 4B pencil and block in the negative shapes and a little of the surrounding space using any shading method you like. You can now simply draw in a few lines and curves to finish the drawing – see how the stool suddenly appears from a group of largely abstract shapes.



The finished drawing

Negative shapes – arum lily

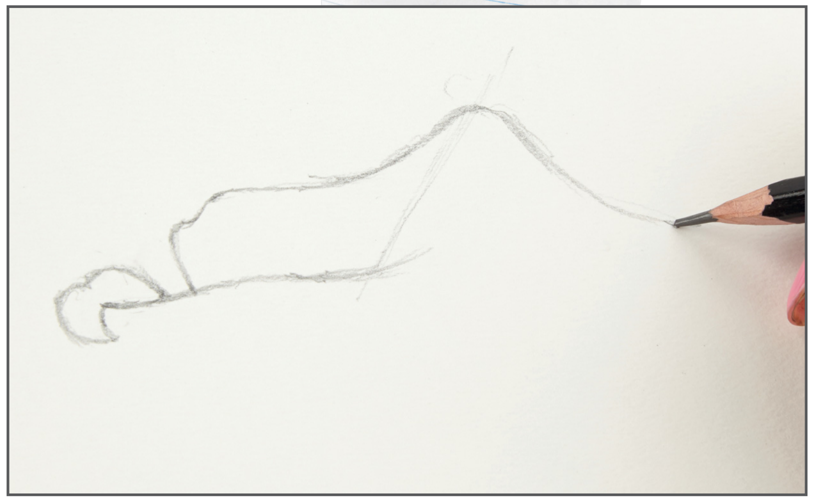
As well as concentrating on the proportions and structure of the petals, pay attention to the negative shapes – the space around the flower, the gap between it and the leaf, and the outer edges of the leaf itself. All help to contribute to producing an accurate drawing.

You will need

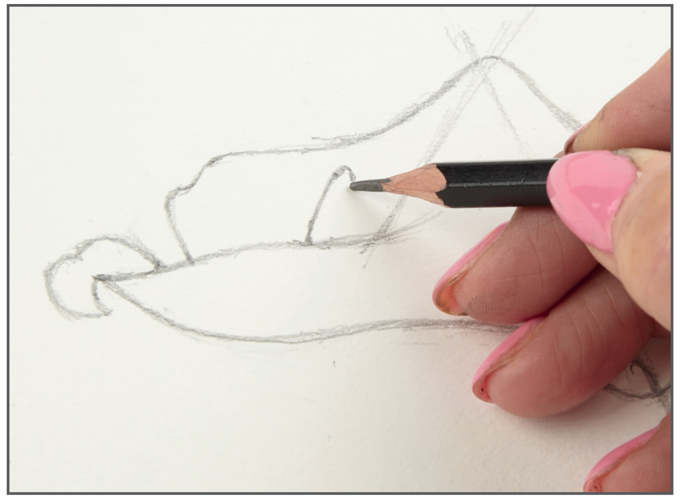
2B graphite pencil
Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
Eraser



1 Starting at the left-hand edge, use a 2B pencil to plot the indent between the tips of the petals, then draw the curving line running across the centre of the flower.



2 Moving to the back of the flower, draw its curving rim, noting the rising shape and relative proportions with the rest of the flower.

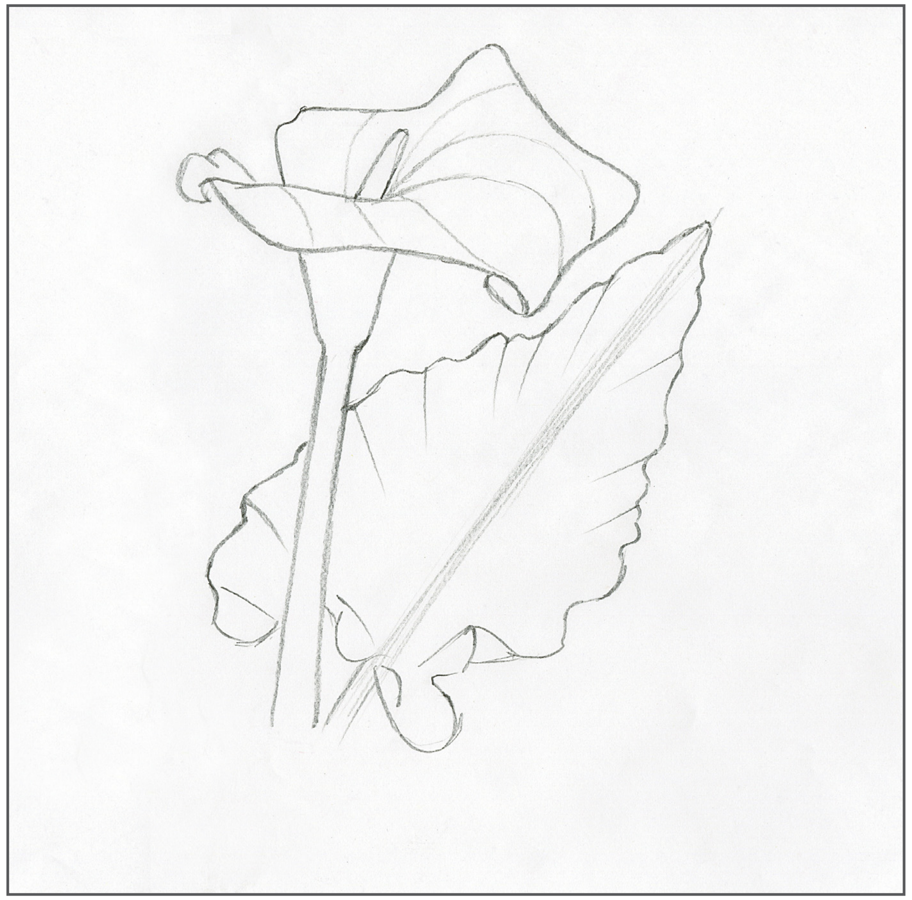


3 To complete the outline, use diagonal lines across the flower to help plot its irregular shape, then draw in the stamen.



4 Follow the lines down from the tapering centre of the flower to help delineate the neck and position the stem.

5 To draw the upper side of the leaf, concentrate on following the negative shape between it and the flower. Then, put in the centre line and the lower edge of the leaf.



6 Finally, add the veining detail to the leaf, enhance the wavy edge, and shade the stamen.



The finished drawing

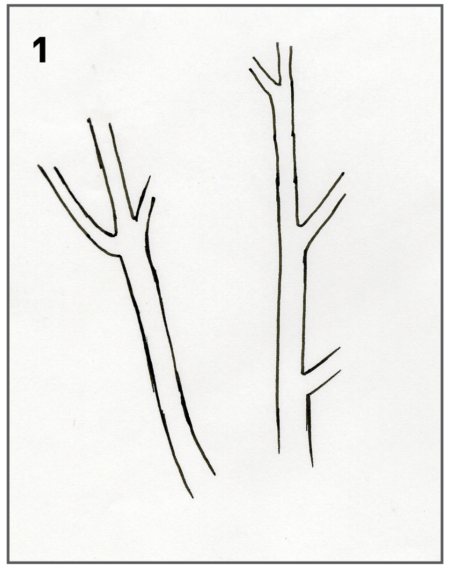
Negative shapes – large shrub

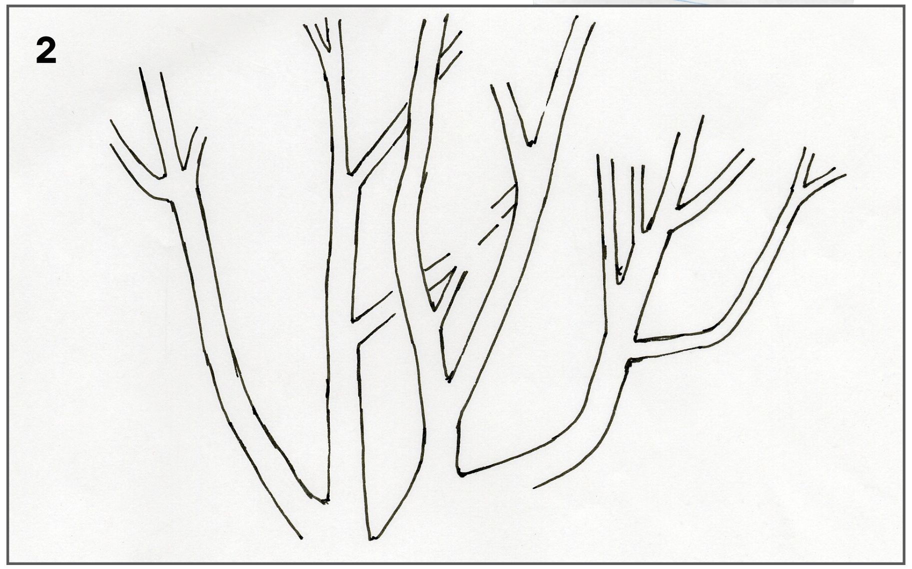
Drawing the overlapping and intertwining branches of trees and bushes is good practise in identifying negative shapes. The long slender branches and foliage here also offer a variety of textures to practise drawing.

You will need

0.3mm fineliner pen

Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)

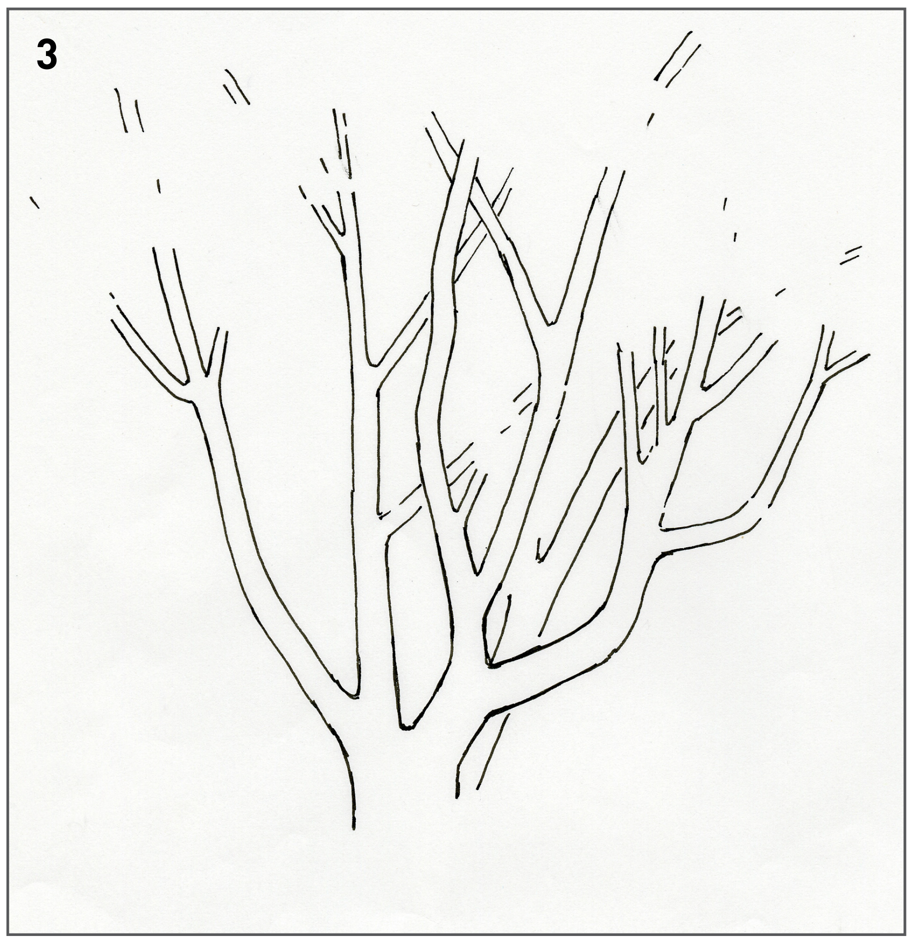




1 Using a 0.3mm fineliner pen, start drawing in the middle of the left-hand branch, then move across to the next branch and its side shoots.

2 Spend a little time noting which branches cross behind others, and compare the thickness of the branches and the negative spaces between them, then draw the other main branches.

3 Join the base of the branches and the trunk, then add the branch behind. Before adding any foliage, put in some of the smaller branches amongst the foliage with 'hit and miss' lines.





4 Add the foliage. This will not only cover the top branches but also appear behind a few of the lower branches and in front of the trunk. To complete the drawing, shade the trunk and a few of the branches that were in shadow.

The finished drawing

I have used hatching and cross-hatching for the shading on this tree, but you might like to try a different shading technique.

Sketching

So far we have discussed drawing techniques, but in this section we look at the practice of sketching. What is the difference between the two? Sketching is normally regarded as a looser, speedier form of drawing which is often done from life rather than a photograph. The physical limitations of working outside – weather conditions, changing light, and so forth often make for a quicker and freer rendering than that produced in the studio. Sketches can be done on any type of paper, but it is more practical to keep them together in a sketchbook.

Sketchbooks

There are many types of sketchbook in a variety of sizes and formats. I prefer to use a hardbacked, casebound sketchbook; the rigid cover provides a flat surface to work on and when it is opened out, I can continue the drawing across both pages. The paper needs to be of a reasonable thickness – 140gsm (95lb) or more will take any drawing medium and a certain amount of water too, making it suitable for use in sketching.

I use a variety of sketchbooks, and have examples in many formats: landscape, portrait and square.

Keeping a sketchbook

Drawing, like any other skill, takes practice and persistence if you want to improve, so try to draw as often as possible. A sketchbook is your own personal visual diary and your subjects can be anything and everything, using any drawing implement that you have to hand. Keeping a sketchbook can serve many beneficial purposes:

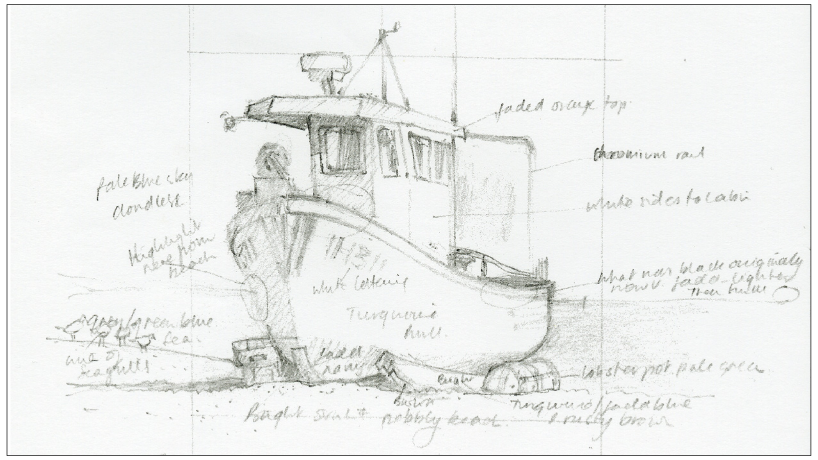
- To practise drawing skills
- To improve hand–eye coordination and speed up your working
- To improve confidence
- As a personal record of places, faces and events
- As an instant recall of holidays and special memories
- To gather information and as a source of reference for future work.





Flowerpot Gal, pen

I loved this scarecrow made out of painted flowerpots, straw and an upturned basket for her hat. She sat staring at her 'partner' at the other end of the vegetable plot. Although I also took a photograph for colour reference, sketching it using dark and light brown 0.3mm fineliner pens sealed the picture in my memory of the birdsong and the happy ambience of a warm spring day.



Fishing Boat at Aldeburgh, pencil

As well as making a sketch of this picturesque boat, I have annotated the drawing, making detailed notes about light, colour, and content. For example 'Pale blue cloudless sky', 'bright sunlit pebbly beach', 'faded orange top', 'white lettering', 'highlight here from beach', 'chromium rail' and so forth. I used this additional information to make a larger colour study at a later date in the studio.



The Terrace, Sardinia, pen

Every evening the sun set behind the balcony casting an interesting pattern of shadows across the terrace, the scene of many convivial aperitifs! I was initially intrigued by the shadows, but became engrossed in the wrought iron chairs and table with their backdrop of plants.



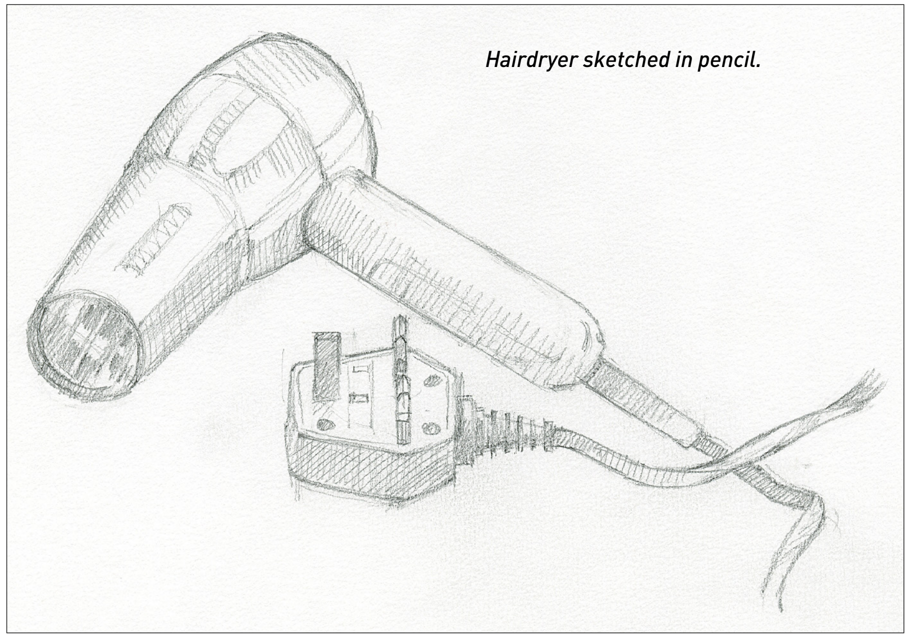
Place St Sauveur, Dinan, black chinagraph pencil

I sat tucked away around the side of St Sauveur cathedral to sketch the old clock tower, avoiding too many interruptions from passers-by. The off-centre, leaning spire is a distinctive feature in this quaint medieval town. I simplified the buildings below it but added more detail to the timbered house in the foreground. Using darker tones on the foreground building created tonal contrasts, which makes the scene look brighter and sunnier.

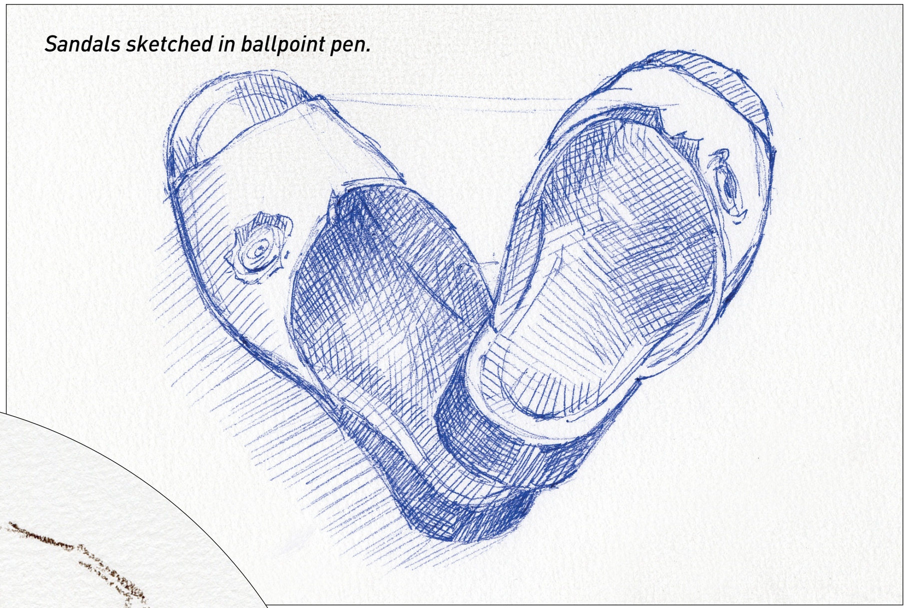
Indoor sketching

To practise working from life, make a start by drawing what you can see in your immediate surroundings at home. You don't have to wait for 'inspiration'; even the most unassuming object can prove fascinating. Start with something quite simple.

This page shows sketches of some familiar objects I have made using pencil, brown pastel pencil, pen and ballpoint pen.



Hairdryer sketched in pencil.



Sandals sketched in ballpoint pen.



Pot of jam sketched with brown pastel pencil.

Outdoor sketching

When you first begin sketching outdoors, it can feel quite daunting as there's so much to see! I suggest starting in the garden by drawing some plants or flowers. Start with something very simple such as a few leaves, or a single flower, then move on to a more complex subject when you feel ready. In this way you will gain confidence and improve your drawing skills before starting to sketch in busier public places.

Make sure you are well equipped for the weather. It's easy to get carried away with sketching and get sunburnt, or alternatively sit too long and become very cold!

Simple sketches outdoors

In both the leaves and rose leaf sketches here, I concentrated equally on the leaves themselves and the shapes between them. This helped me when drawing the leaves' relative positions and form – most do not appear as 'typical' leaf shapes owing to the fact we are seeing them from the side, foreshortened or from underneath. Putting in some central veins, where you can see them, helps to give structure and direction to the growth.

For sketches with a more obvious focus, like the poppy head here, you can start by lightly sketching in the focal point (the poppy centre) in pencil, but if you are feeling brave, by all means go straight in with the pen. Here, I started by delineating the left-hand central petal, before drawing the centre of the poppy. Working outwards, I observed both the positive and the negative shape of the petals, to draw the rest of the poppy.

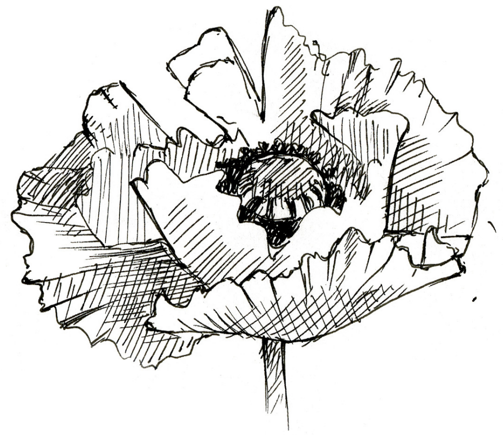
Leaves in 2B and 4B pencil



Rose leaves in 2B and 4B pencil



Poppy in pen



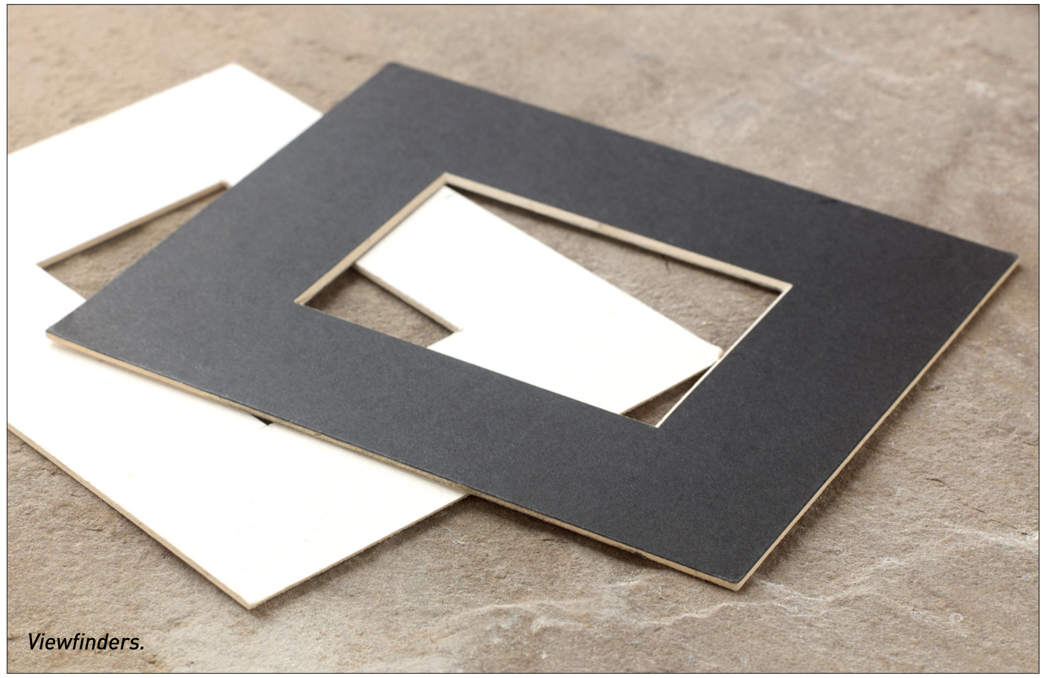
Tip

When sketching outdoors, clamp your sketchbook pages to the cover with bulldog clips to stop them flapping in the breeze.

Viewfinders

A viewfinder is a very simple but useful drawing aid for selecting a general view. It helps in deciding whether a portrait or landscape format is better, and allows you to frame a vista just as if you were using a camera. Held at arm's length it simulates a close-up view whereas held closer to the eye it provides a wide-angled panorama. I always keep a viewfinder handy, tucked into the front of my sketchbook.

You can make your own viewfinder by cutting 50 x 75mm (2 x 3in) rectangle out of a piece of card or paper, leaving a 37 x 50mm (1½–2in) border all round.



Viewfinders.

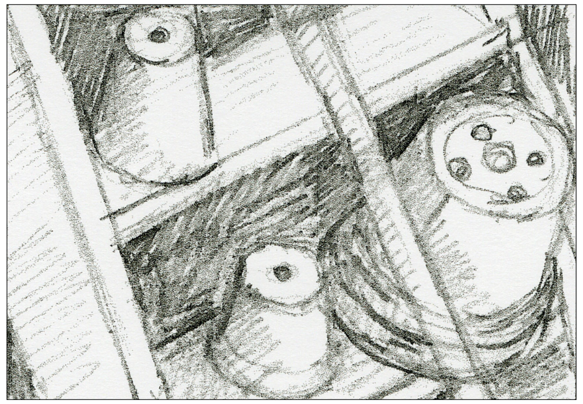
Thumbnail sketches

Thumbnail sketches are small studies that can be used to assess a composition, help decide on portrait or landscape format or used as information-gathering sketches to develop into larger drawings or paintings at a later date. Changing light and weather conditions often dictate the time spent outdoors, so making several small thumbnail line-and-tone sketches is very useful. I often also do one as a 'practice run', then scale it up to make a larger on-the-spot study in my sketchbook.

To do a thumbnail sketch, draw round the inner aperture of the viewfinder to create a rectangle, either portrait or landscape.



A thumbnail sketch of the dovecote and the church. As well as the blocks of foliage, I have indicated relative tones too.



Here the viewfinder was used to isolate the angled view of several clay pots perched on an old wooden step ladder. Having made a quick thumbnail sketch, I altered the angle of the rake handle so it was no longer parallel with the sides of the ladder. I then divided the thumbnail into thirds to scale up for a larger, more detailed sketchbook study.



Roses, the Statue and Birdbox

I used my viewfinder to select the viewpoint for this sketch. Using a 0.3mm pen on cartridge paper and without any prior pencil work, I started by drawing the bird box. Some spotted flycatchers were nesting in the crook of the truncated tree, one of which I drew sitting on top of the bird box.

Next I sketched the statue fairly freely, and two roses nearest the head of the statue. Working vertically, I loosely added some more roses, and their surrounding foliage. To make the statue stand out I scribbled in the darker fern fronds behind it and some distinctive leaves in the foreground.

Having drawn the three main elements, I darkened some areas to add depth – behind the bird box and the structure supporting the climbing roses – and added a simple suggestion of background shrubs to complete this impression of a corner of our garden.

Tip

Although photographs can be a very useful source of reference material, working 'from life' is the best practice. The process of interpreting our three-dimensional world into two dimensions compels us to make decisions about composition and perspective, assess tonal values, discern one shape against another and make many individual judgements to produce a personal, edited version of reality. However, there is no reason why you cannot supplement your sketches with reference photos to aid further studies.

Sketching with water-soluble pencils

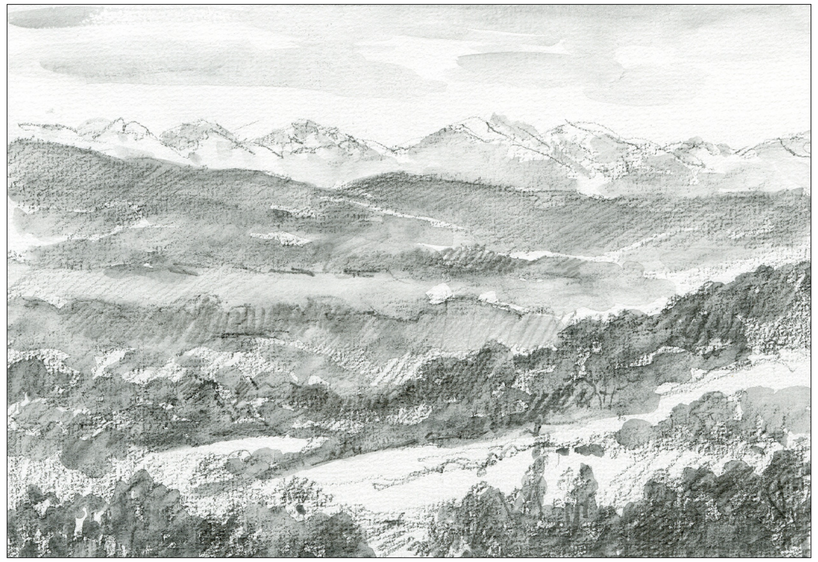
There are two main types of water-soluble pencils: water-soluble graphite and water-soluble coloured pencils.

Water-soluble graphite A very useful sketching tool, these can be used just like regular pencils. They are available in light, medium and dark grades. As well as using it like conventional graphite, water can be added to produce a range of tones, simply and easily. Unwanted pencil lines can be erased once it has all dried.

Water-soluble coloured pencils Like water-soluble graphite, these pencils can be used wet or dry, or, as I prefer, a combination of both. They are extremely versatile, serving as an effective drawing device whilst offering the added bonus of colour. They can be erased when dry but become permanent once wetted.



Water-soluble graphite pencils and water-soluble coloured pencils. A small paintbrush and clean water can be used to wet them.



View Towards the Pyrenees, water-soluble graphite

This was an inspiring panoramic vista which needed simplifying to capture as a sketch. I used a light wash pencil for the distant mountains and landscape, switching to a dark wash for the middle and foreground. While still wet I drew into the trees in front to intensify and darken them. I 'borrowed' some grey from a wet area to wash in the pale clouds.



Mother and Children, water-soluble graphite

This quick sketch was drawn on the spot with more detail added later from a photograph. Having drawn it with a medium wash pencil, I added water carefully and selectively with a size 5 brush. I scribbled some pencil to one side, which, when wetted, produced a pale wash to contrast with the heads of the mother and children.



Venice Sketches, water-soluble pencils

These sketches for paintings show a misty morning (left) and an equally misty evening, using a limited range of water-soluble pencils on a medium surface cartridge paper without adding any water. They create a textured, atmospheric quality.



Thatched Cottage, Inktense water-soluble pencils

Having established the cottage, windows and doors, I outlined the plants, then layered two or three colours for the thatch, the green foliage and the shadows. Wetting a colour makes it darker, so having 'coloured in' the scene, I added water selectively, drawing with my size 5 brush to create spots of colour or dark marks in some areas and washes of colour elsewhere, but leaving enough unpainted areas to create the effect of sunlight. I left the side wall of the cottage unwetted, allowing the effect of the dry pencil to lend texture and interest.

Sketching with water-soluble pens

Water-soluble pens allow you to use a wet brush to draw out watercolour-like effects from your sketches. Most water-soluble pens, once dry, are permanent. They can be used in conjunction with water-soluble pencils and watercolours, and they make an excellent sketching tool.

If you are new to using water-soluble pens, try experimenting first before committing them to your sketchbook. Some have more strength, while others dissolve better. There is a full range of colours available but I prefer to use a selection of browns, greys and black for sketching to add warmth to shadows and create a tint without using overly vibrant colours.



Water-soluble pens and brush.



Vine Leaves

Using a water-soluble brown pen, I dotted in the outline shape of the leaves to establish their relative sizes and get the positions correct before drawing their jagged edges and adding the veining and cross-hatching on the parts of the leaves I wanted to be darker, as well as onto the background.

Once the image was complete, I used a size 5 round watercolour brush to add water selectively to the largest, lightest leaf. The technique is to draw with the brush, teasing the pigment from the pen lines into a wetted area. I concentrated on the tonal balance, remembering 'light against dark, dark against light' throughout the sketch. When completely dry, I penned in a little more veining in the leaves to bring back definition and structure.

Sketching figures with water-soluble pens

Water-soluble pens are ideal for sketching figures, as tones can be created quite rapidly by adding a little water with a water pen. I make lots of small sketches to try to capture their character and movement. See pages 96–99 for more information on drawing figures.



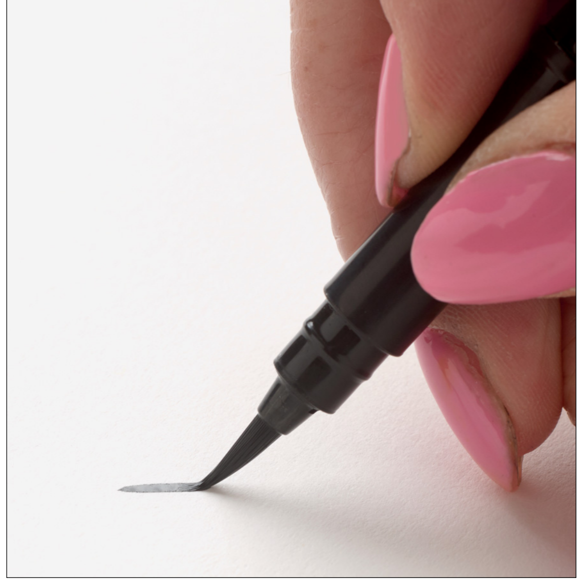
Street In Essouira, Morocco

From my vantage point sitting outside a café, I sketched the bustling street opposite. Using water-soluble pen enabled me to effectively block in the darker building and some of the foreground figures by pulling out the dark pigment from the drawn line to fill the space; small patches of colour were added with water-soluble pencils.



Sketching with brush pens

My favourite brush pen has a very flexible nylon brush tip, like a watercolour brush (Pentel brush pen). It is ideal for creating a wide variety of lines from thick black marks to very fine tapering lines. It is permanent, so washes can be added with water-soluble pencils or watercolours. Some brush pens have stiffer, nylon-fibre tips that make a thicker mark than the fineliners we have used so far in the book. It is always a good idea to test the permanency if you are going to add water.





Willow by the Stour

This was a quick ten-minute study in my sketchbook. Using the brush pen allowed me to make rapid, animated marks for the masses of spiky branches; I used thicker, twisting strokes to represent the gnarled tree trunk and allowed the drawing to spread over two pages.



Garden Statue and Shrubs

Drawing directly with the pen, I drew the statue, then the bird box before adding the foliage, trying to create a variety of marks to represent the different shaped leaves.



White Teddy Bear

This more developed sketch was made with water-soluble Graphitint pencils – a type of pencil that contains colour-tinted graphite. I used the following colours: dark indigo (4), port (01), cool brown (15), meadow (10), storm (18), and midnight black (20).

I began by drawing Ted with the dark indigo pencil, then added the scarf and cushion with port (dark red). Next, I drew in his eyes, nose and the mid line with the cool brown and hatched in the green background with meadow. I put in the shading with storm (a warm grey), and port. I added shading on the teddy and used dark indigo for the darker shading around and behind him.

Having completed the drawing stage, I added water with a size 6 watercolour brush, first to the cushion, then the green background, being careful to maintain the fluffy outline. To paint the teddy I washed in colour on his forehead, nose and the pads of his feet, whilst drawing with the brush in other areas to produce the soft furry effect.

When it was dry I enhanced some of the darker colours, particularly around the bear to make him stand out more and the cushion which looked a bit blotchy; this was all left unwetted. Finally I used the midnight black to darken his nose eyes and midline.

Landscapes

Depicting landscapes in art goes back over a thousand years or more. It is said that landscape painting was China's greatest contribution to the art world, such was their long tradition of painting stylised scenes.

In Western art, landscape painting was regarded as inferior to portraiture and 'history painting' for a long time. Dutch artists of the seventeenth century elevated landscape painting, focussing on simple rural scenes which often included animals with people and concentrating on effects of light and atmosphere. However it wasn't until the nineteenth century that artists were able to paint spontaneously outdoors – *en plein air* – with the invention of portable tubes of paint, an innovation that the Impressionists exploited to its full potential.

Cityscapes

You may not live in the country or have the opportunity to draw what we think of as the conventional landscape but that should not prevent you making studies of an urban scene. Indeed man-made 'scapes' make fascinating studies.

Tip

If you decide to draw from photographs, try to use them as a reference only, allowing your version to be individual and not a slavish copy. Remember that a photograph captures a snapshot of a landscape or subject, whereas your eyes see it over a period of time, thus obtaining a more rounded, considered representation.



Outline 3

Pyrenean Landscape

In this study using water-soluble pencils, I have added water quite economically – primarily to the lake, and to those areas in the foreground I wanted to enhance – the dark trees on the left, the tree stumps and the rocks; other areas are left uncoloured, allowing the dry colour to add texture to the scene.

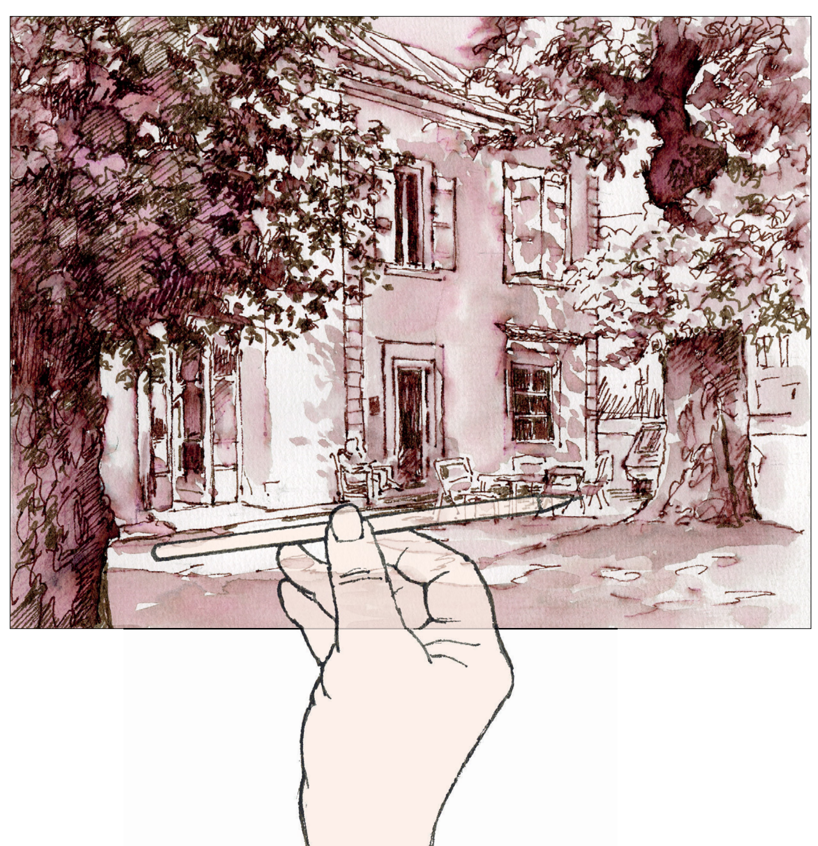


Techniques for drawing landscapes from life

Earlier in the book, we looked at techniques to aid drawing things close-to. The techniques here will allow you to assess larger scenes in front of you and help you break down even complex landscapes.

Checking angles

To check the angle of a sloping line in the scene, hold your pencil up and align it with the line. Without tipping your wrist, and keeping the pencil parallel, swing it over to the paper and draw the line. Repeat the action to check it is correct.



To assess the angle of the street, the pencil is held at the same angle. The same process can be done to help check the angle of the roof, or any other angled areas in your landscape.

Proportional measuring

Proportional measuring will help you assess and compare distances in front of you so that you can get the proportions of your drawing correct.

For this technique, it is essential to extend your arm at a consistent distance when you are measuring. The easiest way to ensure this is to hold the pencil out straight at arm's length.

Comparing distances

Identify the parts of the scene in front of you that you want to compare – here I want to see how the distance between the foreground tree and brick facade on the building compares with the distance between the brick facade and the corner of the building.

Hold the pencil up in front of you and close one eye. Align the end of the pencil with the first point on the scene (in this example, I started with the left-hand side of the foreground tree), then put your thumb on the pencil at the second point (the facade in this example).

Keeping your arm out straight and the pencil at the same angle, you can now move the end of the pencil to another point on the image – in this case, I moved the end of the pencil to the brick facade. This gives you your unit of measurement.

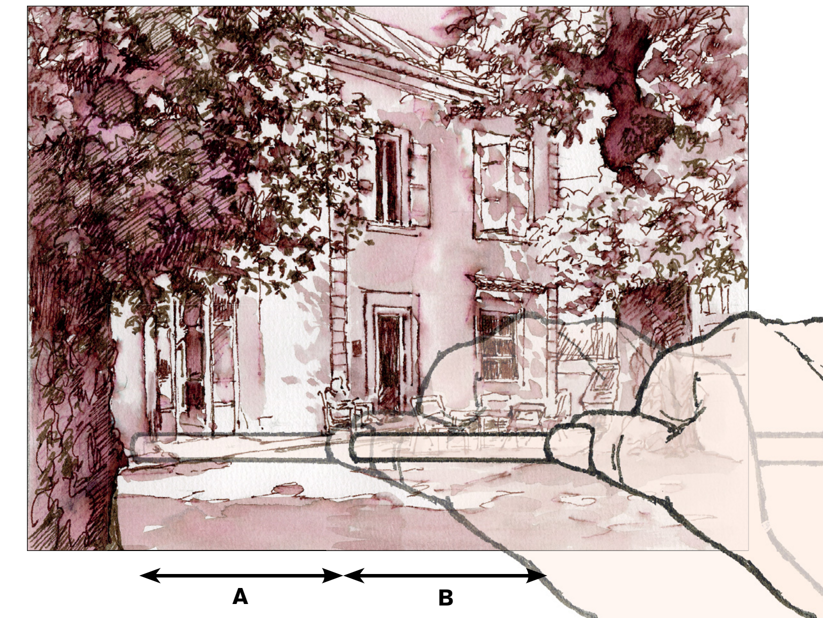
You can see from the diagram on the top right that the distance between the tree and the brick façade in the centre of the building (A) is similar to the distance between the same façade and the corner of the building (B). Knowing this, you can make sure that the two distances match on your drawing, which ensure the proportions of your drawing are correct.

Look for other similar distances as you continue to build up your drawing.

Transferring the distances to your paper

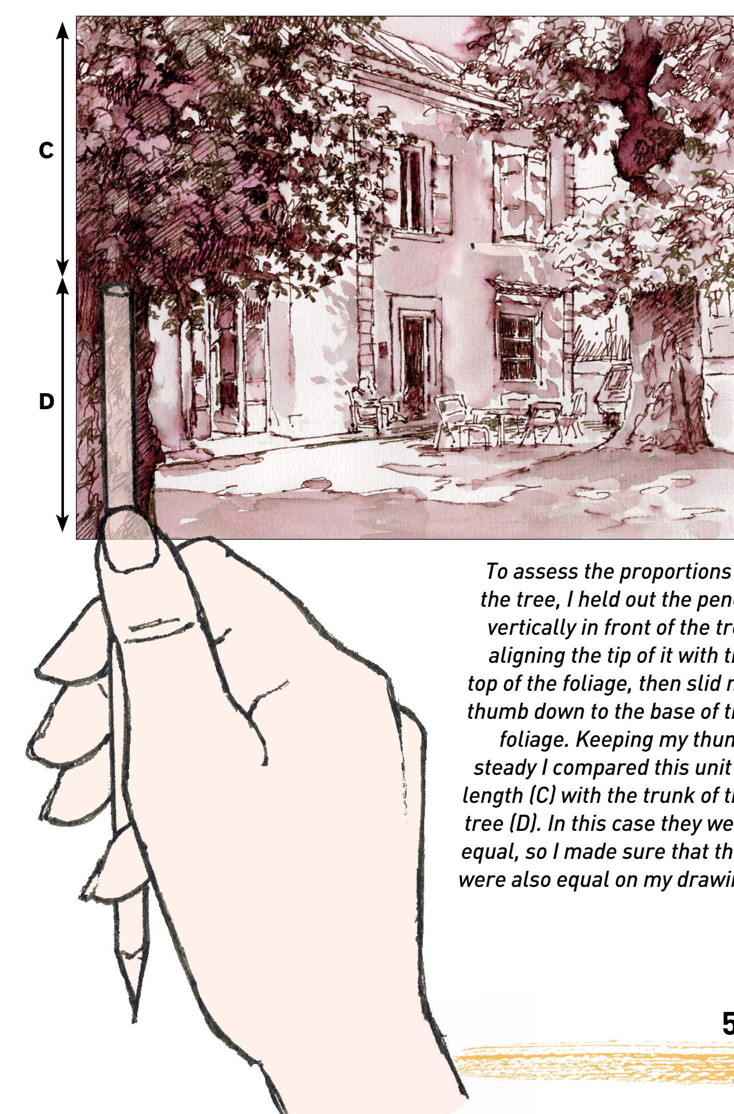
You can swing your arm down to the paper (as for 'checking angles', opposite) and make reference marks for the tip of the pencil and end of your thumb. This will help you work at the exact size the image appears to your eye.

Alternatively, you can alter the unit of measurement, resulting in a smaller or larger drawing. The important thing is to alter it consistently. However large or small you make your drawing, the proportions should remain the same.



Comparing distances

Holding the pencil horizontally, I measured the space between the tree and the centre line of the house façade (A), and moved my thumb along to mark the point. Moving my hand to the right, and keeping my thumb in the same place, I aligned the end of the pencil with the centre line and noted that the right-hand side of the house was the same distance (B).



To assess the proportions of the tree, I held out the pencil vertically in front of the tree, aligning the tip of it with the top of the foliage, then slid my thumb down to the base of the foliage. Keeping my thumb steady I compared this unit of length (C) with the trunk of the tree (D). In this case they were equal, so I made sure that they were also equal on my drawing.



Trees

There are many different varieties of trees – and all trees are slightly different. This can make them intimidating for the beginner, but there are some general characteristics that, once understood, will help you capture their shapes, foliage and texture in your drawing:

- In nearly all cases, the trunk of a tree is straight and the two sides parallel.
- The base of the tree curves out where the roots start to form.
- As the trunk divides into branches and the branches subdivide, at each stage the thickness diminishes.
- Some branches cross behind others. When added in, the smaller branches create greater detail and make a surprising difference.

Tree in winter

Stripped of their foliage, the growth pattern and skeletal shape of deciduous trees can be clearly seen. This makes sketching winter trees a good place to start. Look for the listed qualities in this simple drawing.

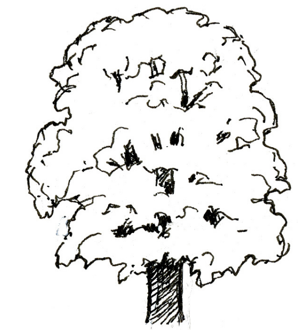
Simple trees

The examples on this page show a few common trees next to each other for comparison. Once you can identify the specific sort of tree in the landscape before you, you will quickly spot familiar features, making drawing them more approachable.



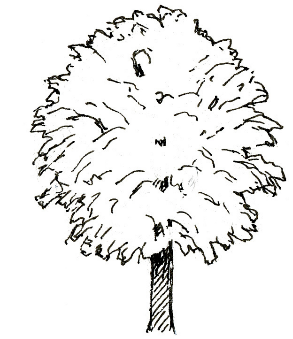
Chestnut

The base of this large tree standing in open parkland has been browsed by deer, hence the artificially straight 'browsing line'. The branches appear here and there between the foliage.



Oak

The oak is another big tree, with a large head of foliage. Note that in this example, the trunk is relatively short compared with the foliage. Sometimes the branches of an oak tree are quite contorted.



Small hazel tree

This tree has thick, full foliage, with hardly any branches showing through.



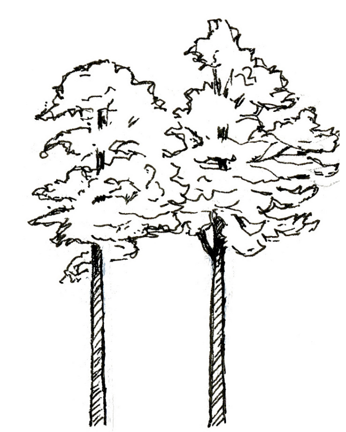
Young cherry tree

The foliage, quite open, splays out from the centre; the directions of the outer branches are particularly characteristic.



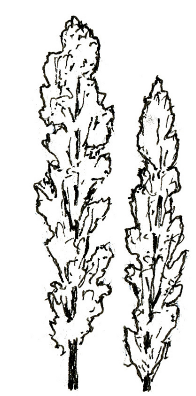
Silver birch

This is quite a large tree with delicate, drooping foliage; sometimes multi-trunked with a lot of thinner branches showing through the greenery.



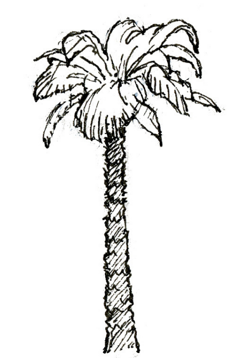
Douglas firs

These are tall trees with very straight trunks. The dense foliage occupies only the top third or quarter of the tree with horizontal or upward growth.



Poplars

Poplars are tall, thin trees with lots of upward-growing branches showing through the delicate foliage, which start near the base of the tree.



Palm tree

This type of tree is often very tall, with a textured trunk. The foliage, occupying the top quarter or third, is shiny and sways in the breeze.

Charcoal

Charcoal is a very useful drawing medium that is very easily blended, affording the artist a variety of effects. It is, as a result, susceptible to being smudged, but you can use a fixative to help minimise this once the work is finished. Charcoal is usually bought as sticks. It is available in a number of different forms:

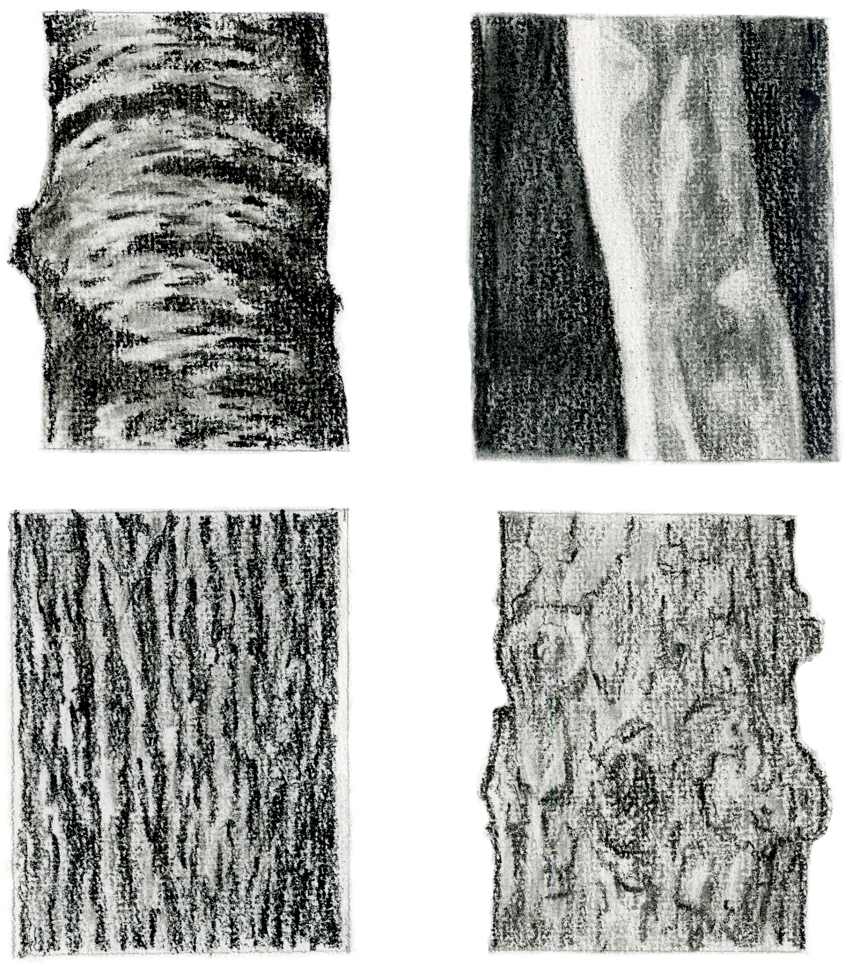
Natural vine or **willow charcoal** This is very easily blended and erased.

Compressed charcoal Gives a darker result than natural vine charcoal – useful for depth and drama, but less easily erased.

Charcoal pencils Encased in wood, these are used just like graphite pencils. Charcoal pencils come in three grades – light, medium and dark.



From left to right: charcoal pencil, charcoal white pencil (a chalk-like pencil useful for highlights), willow charcoal sticks, compressed charcoal, cotton buds (Q-tips) and a torchon stick. The latter two are used for blending charcoal.



Charcoal and trees

The qualities of charcoal make it a great drawing medium for trees.

Upper left: Silver birch

A light, silvery bark with blotchy, semi-circular banding.

Upper right: Eucalyptus

A smooth, light-coloured bark, with slightly darker, irregular patterns.

Lower left: Pine

Layered bark with a heavily ridged surface.

Lower right: Oak

Deep linear grooves run vertically throughout the bark.



Charcoal pencil

From left to right are shown strokes made with light, medium and dark charcoal pencil. In each case I have smudged the bottom part of the line, and have erased a diagonal through all three lines to show the difference in depth of tone and permanence.

Pine tree bark in charcoal

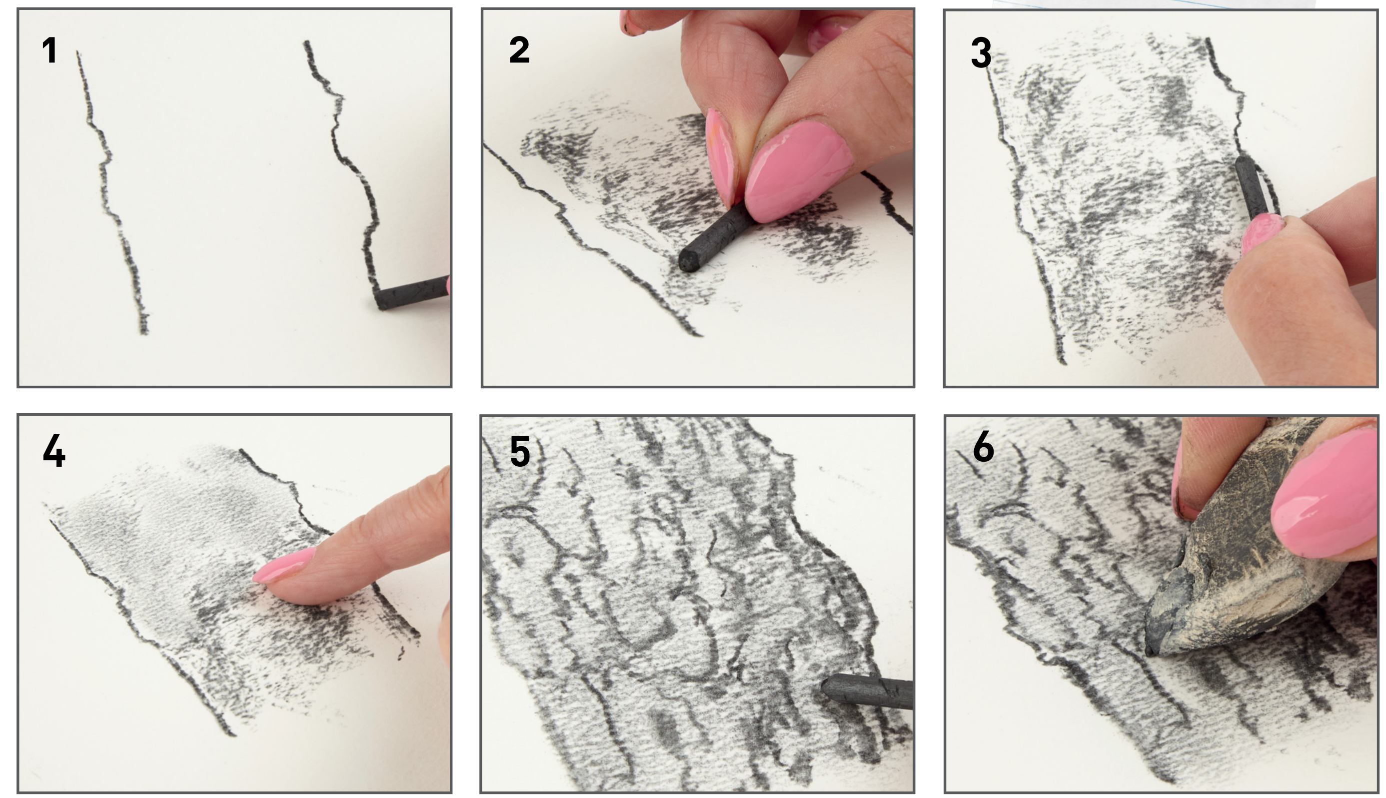
This exercise will show you how to use willow charcoal. Be careful not to smudge the charcoal as you work. Try placing a piece of scrap paper under your hand to avoid accidents.

You will need

Willow charcoal stick

Not surface watercolour paper 300gsm (140lb)

Putty eraser



1 Break a 5cm (2in) length of piece of willow charcoal and use the tip to draw the outline of the tree trunk.

2 Hold the charcoal lightly in the centre and gently rub the surface of the paper with the side. This will leave a soft texture.

3 To work up to the edges of the trunk, turn the charcoal and align it with the edge of the trunk.

4 Use the tip of a clean finger to gently rub in the charcoal in small circular motions. Leave a few hints of texture visible.

5 Using the tip of the charcoal, build up the ridged texture of the bark using wandering marks. Work carefully, and check against your reference material. Add more marks on the right-hand side, to suggest darkness and shadow.

6 Shape a kneadable putty eraser into a point and use it to gently rub away a few highlights.

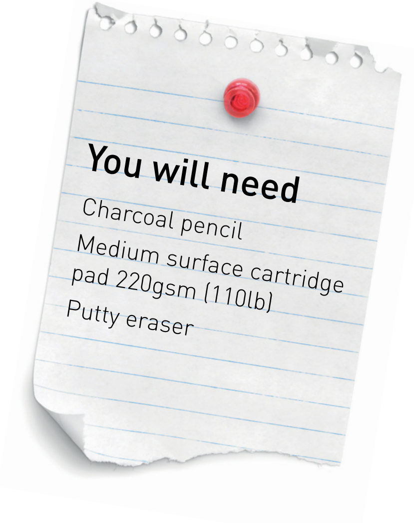


The finished drawing

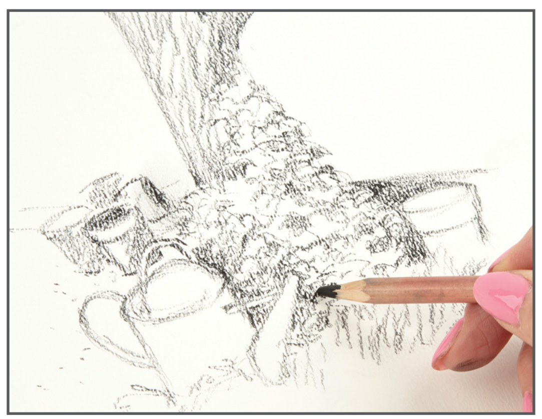
Fruit tree with ivy

This exercise will give you a chance to try out charcoal pencils to draw a simple composition that will show the depth and versatility of charcoal.

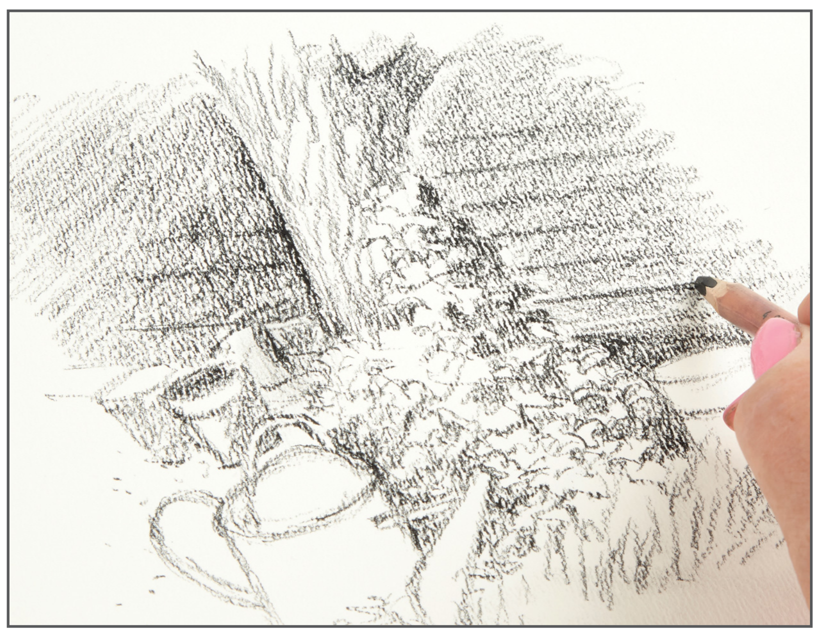




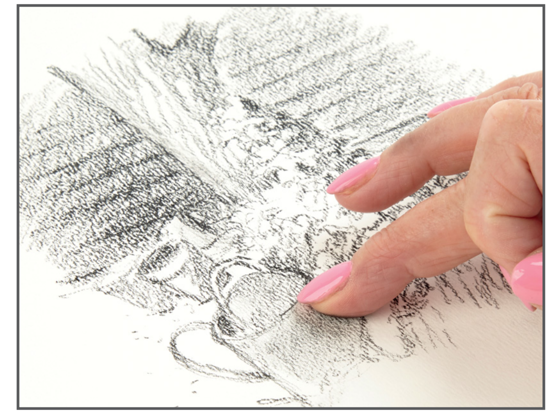
1 Sketch the basic shapes with the charcoal pencil. Start with the tree, as it's the largest object, and all of the other objects are placed relative to it. Add the watering can and the large flowerpot on the right-hand side as basic outlines.



2 Drawing lightly, add the smaller flowerpots and basket lying on its side. Use a loose scribbling action to add the texture of the ivy, and simple flicking strokes for the grasses in the foreground. Start developing the tone across the main shapes. Make the tone darker for shadows on the right-hand side by using more pressure and making the marks closer together. Build the tone behind the watering can to help throw it forward.



3 Use the side of the pencil to build up the tone in the background quickly and smoothly. On the light, left-hand side of the tree, make the background relatively dark. On the darker, right-hand side, make the background relatively light. This brings the tree out of the background and makes the ivy stand out. With the tone in place, add some parallel lines to suggest the timber on the shed wall. For these long lines, move from the shoulder, rather than the wrist.



4 Add tone very lightly to the foreground objects with light pressure, then use your finger to gently smudge the charcoal in. This gives a softer result.



5 Using the tip of the pencil, add some grasses and add some scattered dots to represent the texture for gravel. This is a simple way to create a variety of marks and texture, which helps to suggest realism.

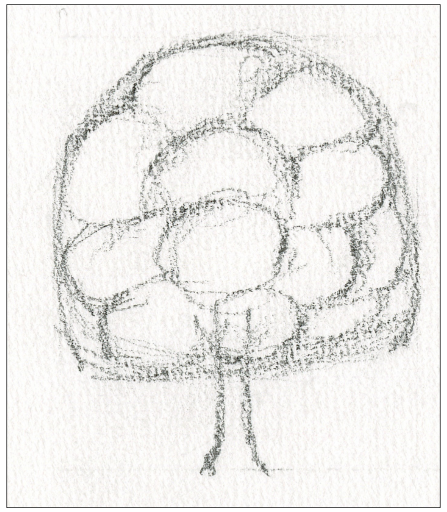


The finished drawing

If anything is too dark in tone, you can use a pressing and lifting action with your putty eraser to lift away some of the charcoal and soften the effect.

Simplifying foliage

It can be quite daunting when drawing a landscape of trees and foliage. The trick is to simplify the foliage of large trees into cauliflower-like clumps as you can see here.

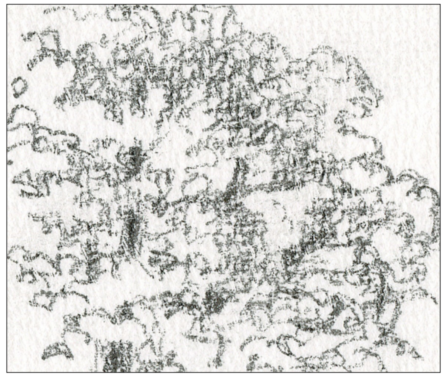




Mark making for foliage

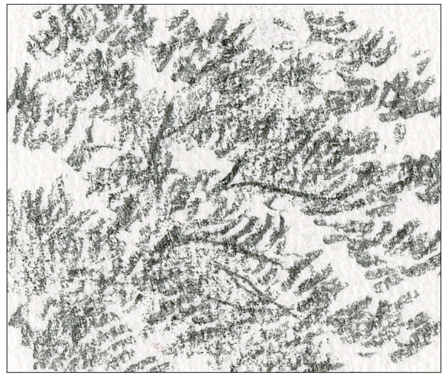
Each species of tree has a characteristic pattern of leaf growth which will be repeated over the whole tree.

The examples show my shorthand marks for some trees. The only area where it may be necessary to put in specific leaf detail is at the edges of the tree or in the foreground.



Oak tree

Scribbly marks are good to describe the complex foliage of oaks.



Douglas Pine

Clusters of short upwards strokes hint at the shape of pine needles without the need for tedious detailing.



Willow

Long, pendulous, criss-crossing marks help describe the distinctive willow foliage. The same technique works for silver birches too.

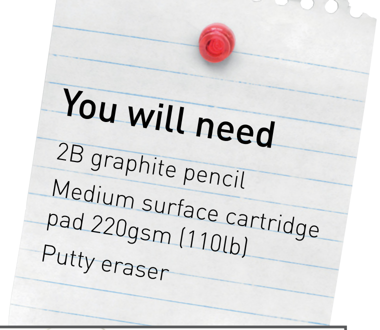


Cedar

Sweeping foliage can be formed with a series of concave and convex curves.

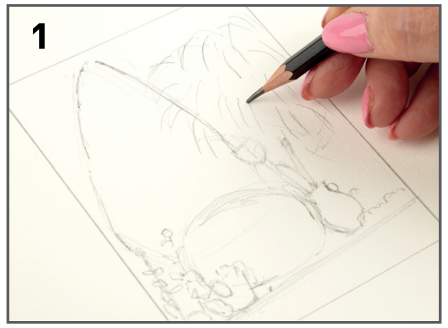
View from the window

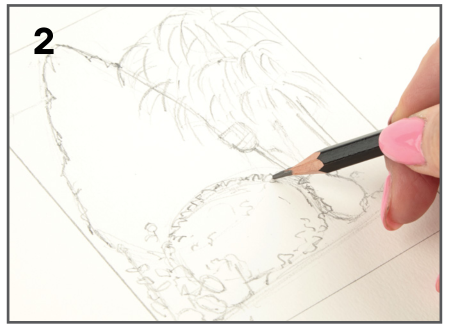
The border near my studio has an array of small trees and shrubs which have different leaf shapes and growth patterns. Try your hand at varied foliage with this simple exercise.



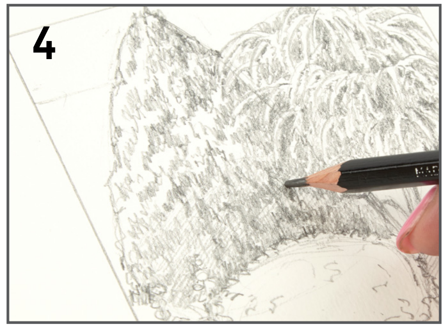
You will need

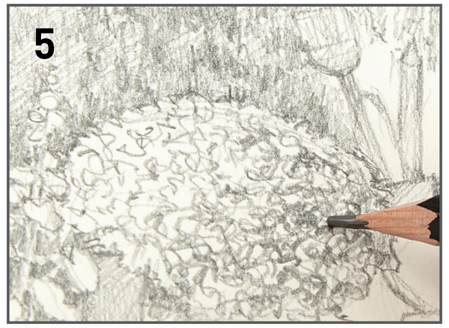
2B graphite pencil
Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
Putty eraser











1 Use a 2B pencil to draw in the conifer as a simplified, slightly rounded triangle, and the foreground bush as an egg shape just above the low wall. The right-hand tree is slightly more complex. Follow the edge around, establishing a few light arching lines.

2 Refine the shapes of the trees. Use short, curved marks for the foliage on the right-hand tree. This is similar to the willow technique described opposite, but here they splay out from each branch, creating a more random effect. Look for larger branches to find starting points, and work in groups of branches. Use short, scribbly marks to refine the foreground bush. The small pointed leaves on this bush are similar to those used for the oak tree technique.

3 Using the curved lines from earlier to help guide you, add tight, squiggling lines to establish darker areas within the tree on the right. Use these to darken the negative shapes, which will make the remaining areas appear like a mass of sunlit leaves.

4 Use light, upright, jagged marks to establish the tops of the light areas against the dark areas in the conifer foliage. Using each establishing mark as the bottom of a shaded area, build up darker tone above it with upright jagged-edged marks. Leave a few lighter areas to represent the foliage from the right-hand tree that sits in front of the conifer, and add a layer of hatching around the lower part to create shadow and suggest the curved shape of the tree.

5 Use wandering, scribbling lines to simulate the foliage all over the foreground bush. Using slightly more pressure to create darker marks on the lower right-hand side for shadow.



The finished drawing

The rest of the drawing is built up with a variety of similar marks. Note how the areas of very dark tone near the trees and bush help to give them shape. In refining, add some heavier detail on the tree on the right-hand side to help enhance the detail.

Morning Light

The interplay of light and shade in this view really appealed to me. The subject of the composition is *contre-jour*. In order to help the light tones appear really bright, the dark tones must be very strong to provide contrast.

This exercise shows that water-soluble pencils can be used very effectively to describe foliage – there's no need to wet them at all.

You will need

- 2B graphite pencil
- Putty eraser
- 0.3mm black fineliner pen
- Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
- Water-soluble pencils (Derwent Inktense): bright blue 1000, sherbet lemon 0100, apple green 1400, teal green 1300, sea blue 1200, indigo 1100, bark 2000, cadmium yellow 2010, beech green 1510, fuchsia 0700, shiraz 0600



1 Draw a 160 x 200mm (6½ x 8in) rectangle as a frame. Start by drawing the line of the bank, then add the rough outline of the central tree. Rather than drawing the objects, look for the large areas of light and dark tones, and draw these in.



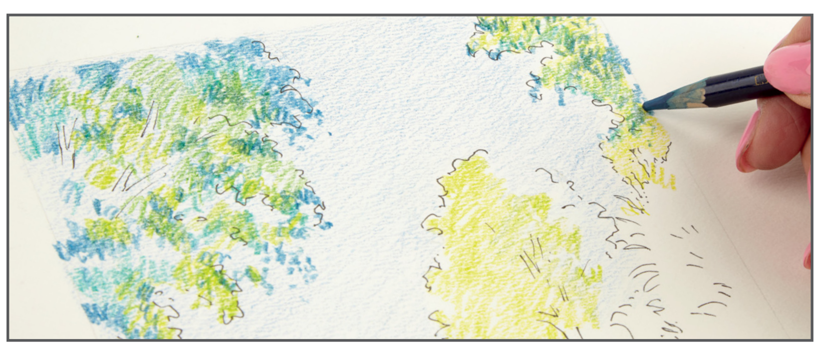
2 Use a 0.3mm black fineliner to ink in the sketch. Use a broken line to suggest foliage in the trees, rather than a clear, solid line. Similarly, add only sections of the trunk and branches. For the grasses, use a series of vertical marks, making them increasingly long for the grasses in the foreground. Once complete, use an eraser to remove the pencil marks.



3 Hold the bright blue water-soluble pencil near the end to keep the marks light. With a scribbling texture, fill in the sky, behind the left-hand tree, and the dark area of the central tree. Use less pressure near the ground level to create a soft gradient of tone.



4 Build up sherbet lemon over the remaining white space on the central tree, taking it into the blue a little. Where the colours overlap, a green will emerge. Continue adding sherbet lemon for sunlit areas of the trees.



5 Working from light-toned colours to dark, build up different tones in the trees. Here I have added apple green, teal green and sea blue. Vary the direction of the marks you make to suggest texture. Make the marks nearer the edges of the trees more defined than those deeper into the shape, as these help to describe the foliage against the sky.



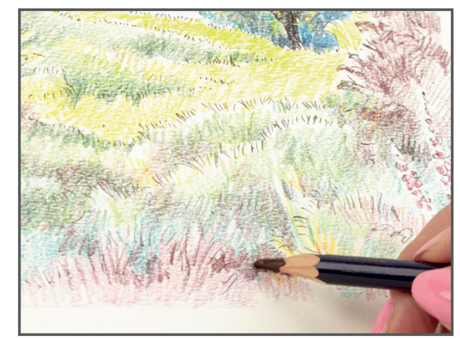
6 As you are building up the central tree, work carefully around the midground foliage on the right-hand side – don't colour this accidentally. Change to indigo for the deepest shades in the trees and to the bark for the trunks and main branches of the trees. Make sure to add these dark marks near the lightest areas.



7 Colour the sunlit areas of grass. Use sherbet lemon for the distant grass, and cadmium yellow for that nearer the foreground. Sherbet lemon is cooler, and so appears to recede. Cadmium yellow is warmer, and so appears to advance. This helps to create the illusion of distance.



8 Add the lines of shadow in the grass. Start by adding apple green fairly lightly in more upright diagonals; though vary this to suggest movement in the grass. Use beech green to selectively overlay the same areas. As you get near to the bottom of the picture, use longer marks and add teal. This is a cool colour, used here for the shadowy area in the foreground.



9 Use fuchsia – a warmer, red-based colour – for the area on the right, and for the foxglove flowerheads and pink-tinged grasses in the foreground. Build up the warmer darks with shiraz, varying the shapes and pressure to suggest layers of foliage. Work over some of the greens, too, to help blend the overall picture together. Leave white space around the foxgloves to help them sing out.



The finished drawing

Skies

The sky is an important element in any landscape. It conveys mood – stormy, sunny, windy – and helps to create a sense of atmosphere, which in turn helps to identify the time of day and the season.

As my 'cloudscape' on the right shows, the sky can be the main focus of a landscape. Alternatively it can merely be a backdrop to the rest of the scene, as with *Pyrenean Landscape* on page 54.

Clouds can be fluffy and wispy or rounded and dense, white and luminous or grey and ominous.

A good way to improve your understanding of skies is to keep a cloud diary, sketching the sky as often as possible to build up a library you can use as a reference later. John Constable (1776–1837), possibly England's most well-known landscape painter, filled many small sketchbooks with hundreds of sketches of the Suffolk landscape including many studies of skies and clouds.

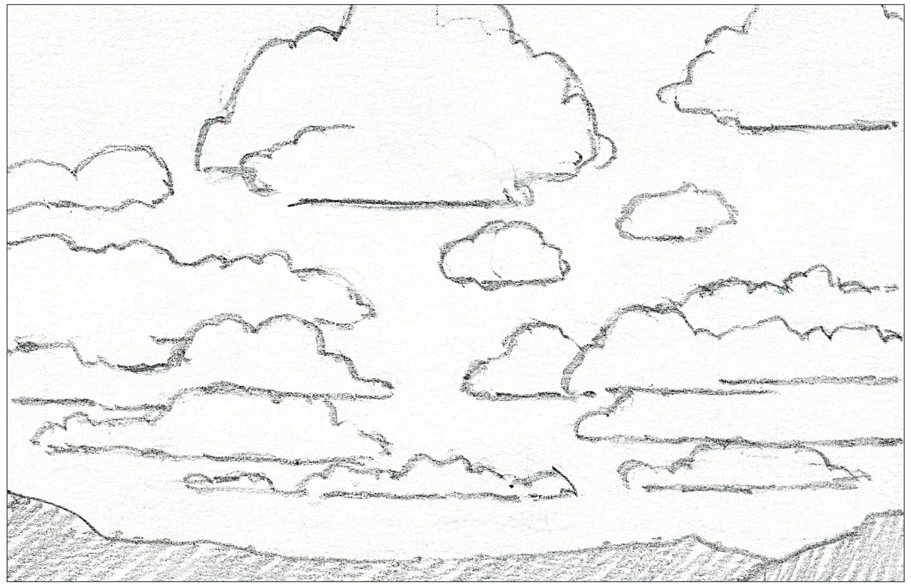
Outline 5



The Lane, Cambridgeshire
Charcoal.

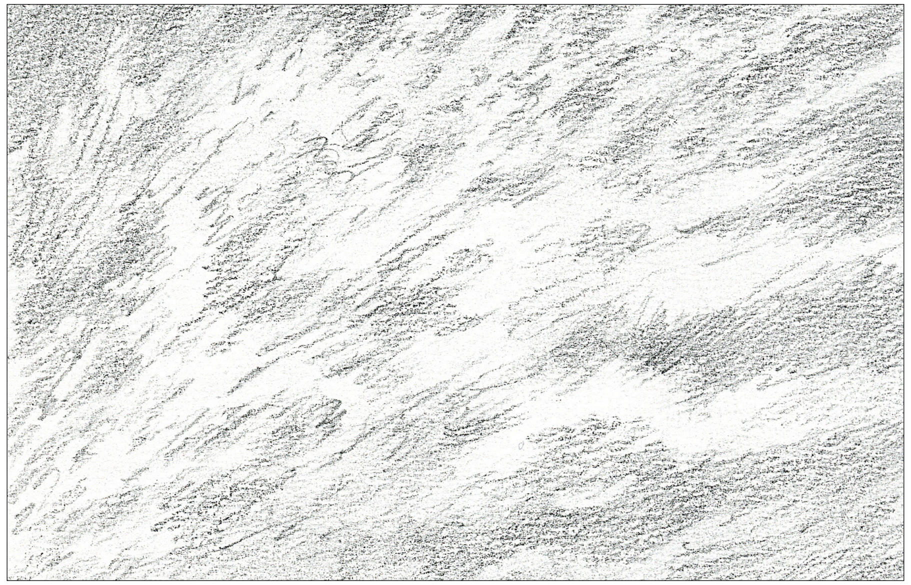
Cloud studies

These examples, show some of the many and varied moods of the sky. Try recreating them using the tips in the captions, using your pencil, pen and charcoal.



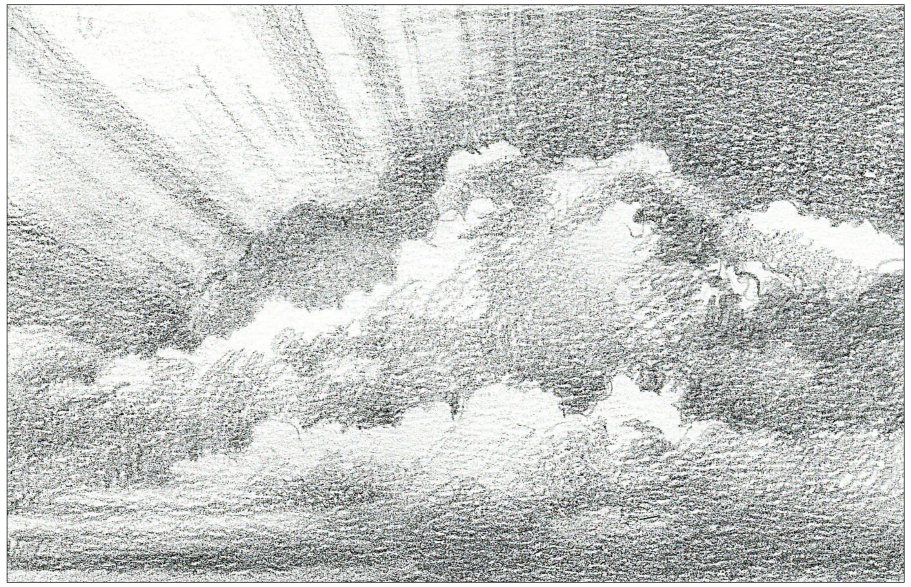
Cloudy sky

Clouds overhead usually appear large and round; as they recede they become progressively smaller and closer together. Shadows on the nearest clouds are darker than the ones in the distance.



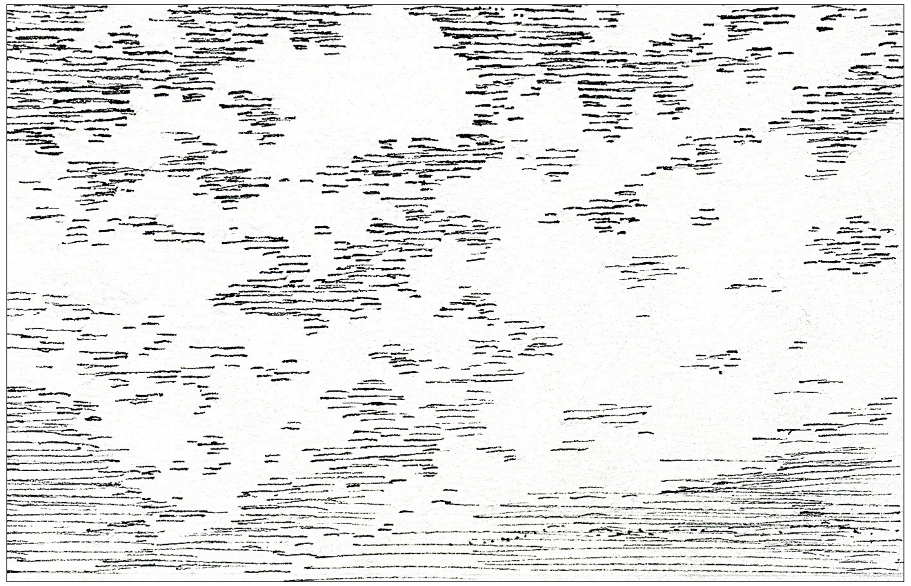
Summer sky 1

Thin, high wispy clouds in a summer sky are often called 'mares' tails'. This pencil sketch uses long light strokes to simulate their delicacy.



Sun rays

Big, bellowing cumulus clouds with a sharp outline and deep shadows. The radiating rays of sunlight were made by pulling a kneadable eraser through the background of grey graphite.



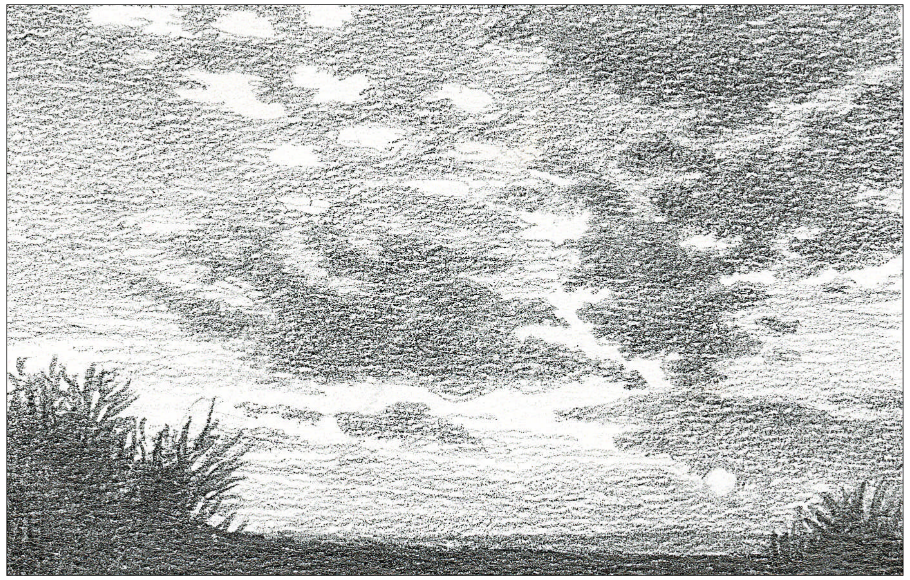
Summer sky 2

Fluffy, ragged-edged clouds in a summer sky, created by drawing the negative spaces with broken horizontal lines. It demonstrates how a delicate effect can be achieved using pen.



Stormy sky

Stormy skies are often dramatic. This example was created by blending in charcoal pencil and 'lifting' some areas by gently rubbing away the charcoal with a shaped kneadable eraser.



Sunset

A sunset with a combination of large, dark grey receding clouds and small fluffy sunlit wisps. The black silhouetted foreground (6B pencil) helps to give more tonal contrast.

Water

Whether used as an element in a landscape or a subject in its own right, water is a fascinating subject for the artist. It has a transient quality that draws the eye in, making it an interesting focal point.

The rhythm or speed of water in a stream, river, lake or the sea dictates the patterns and shapes of the reflections. The distorted reflections in slow-moving water can be studied better from a photograph, although first-hand study is always highly recommended. Fast-moving water, such as a waterfall, a river tumbling over rocks, or the crest of a wave, can also require a camera to freeze the moment.

In this section we cover a range of techniques for portraying water, each of which is accompanied by more examples in different drawing media – there is no one way to draw water. It is a vast subject and there are numerous interpretations, so go out and draw as many as you can and practise, practise, practise!

Outline 6

The Boathouse, Ullswater

This drawing was completed using both water-soluble and permanent brown pens. I sketched the more complicated structure of the boathouse, the distant fells and background trees in pencil before switching to a waterproof brown pen to do the drawing.

The gentle ripples required a softer effect so I added some brown water-soluble pen to the water, the distant fells and some to the trees. I washed in these marks with a size 8 round watercolour brush to complete this tranquil scene.



Slow-moving water

Bodies of still or slow-moving water, like ponds and lakes, often reflect whatever is above them. Reflections can seem tricky, but the tips below will make them much easier to approach.

- Reflections of objects in water are always mirror images of the object, and will sit directly in line and below it. For symmetrical, upright objects, this is easy to draw; but for angled objects, remember that the reflection should slant at the same angle, but be mirrored.
- When an object is positioned away from the water, less of its reflection is seen. In this example, the post stands directly on the riverbank, so its full reflection is seen, whereas only a proportion of the mill is reflected.
- The reflection depends on the movement of the water and air; too much of either and it will be broken up completely. The ripples near the object start the same width and close together, becoming wider and more spaced out the further they are from it.



The Riverbank

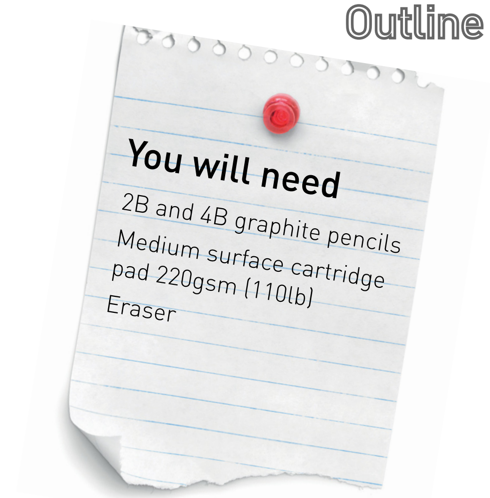
Note that the reflection of the mill is in line with the building itself, while the reflection of the angled post leans in the opposite direction.

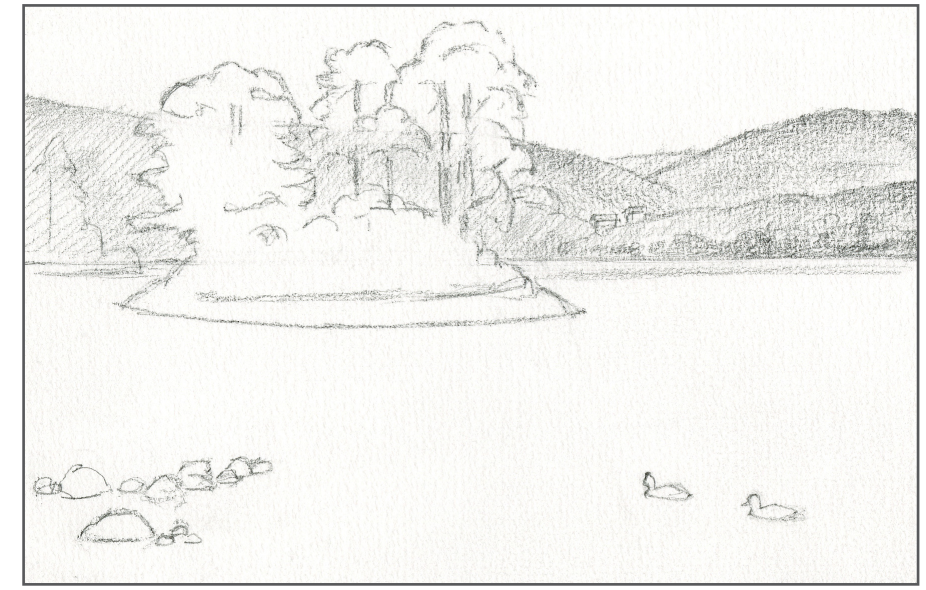
The reflections are drawn with short horizontal lines, and much of the water area away from the bank is left as pure white paper.

Derwent Water

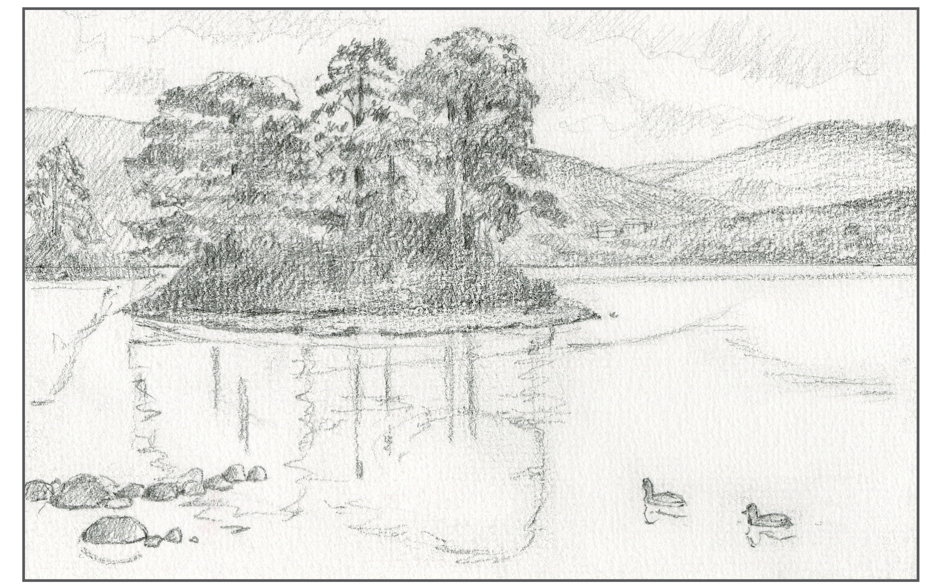
This simple landscape has a small island near the centre, but it is the water surrounding it that is the star of the picture.

Outline 7

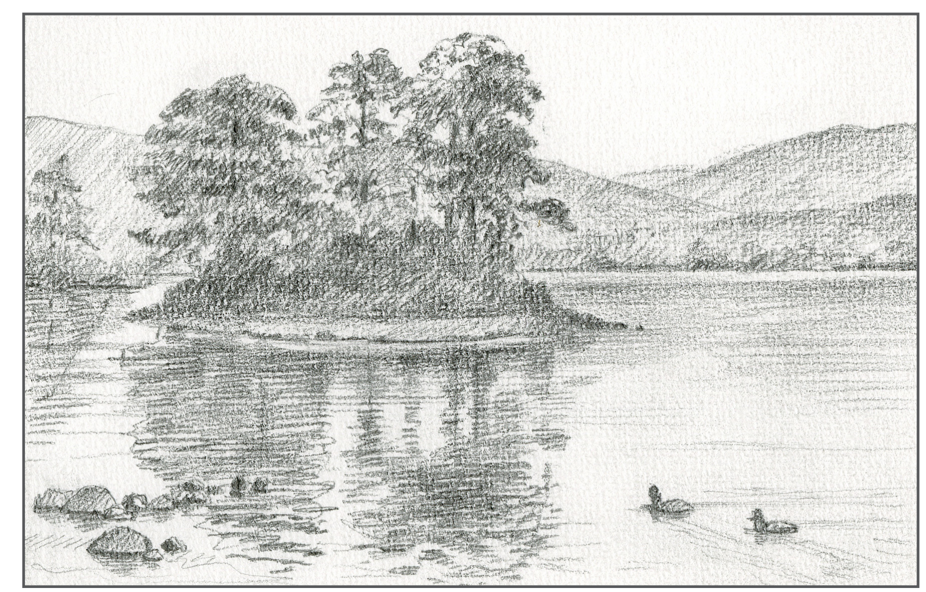




1 Using a 2B pencil, transfer the outline. Start by drawing the horizon, then sketch in the background hills, the island with its tall trees as well as the pebbles and ducks in the foreground. Erase the lines of the horizon and hills that go through the island and trees before shading in the distant shore and hills.



2 Switch to a 4B pencil to build up tone and detail to the island and the trees; then darken the pebbles and the ducks.

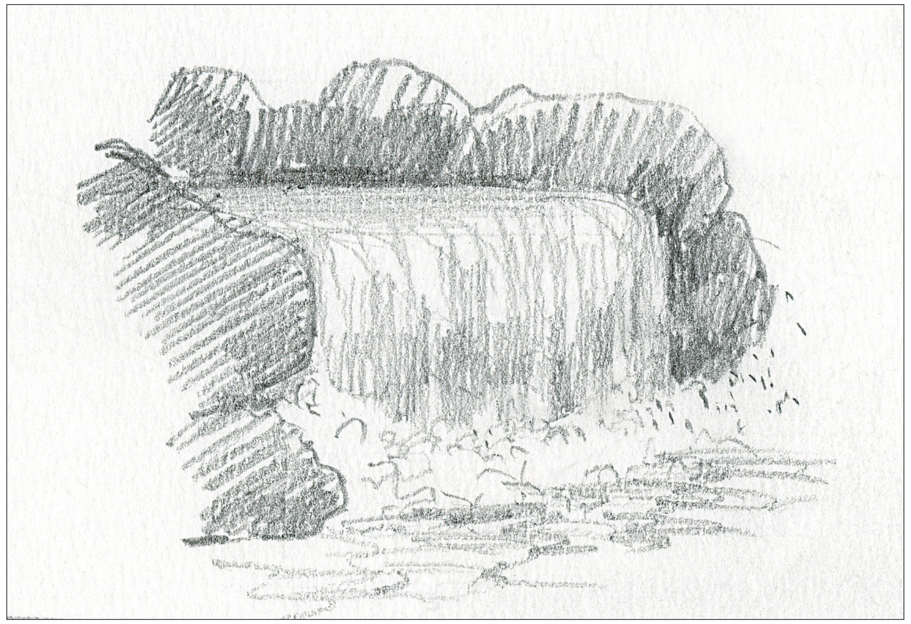


3 Create the reflections using horizontal strokes. Using a 2B pencil, first add the light reflection of the distant hills. Then change to a 4B to add the reflection of the island and trees, mirroring the inverted shapes of the branches and foliage. Add reflections for the pebbles, as well as the ripples coming from the swimming ducks. If necessary, darken some of the trees on the island to make the background recede.

Fast-moving water

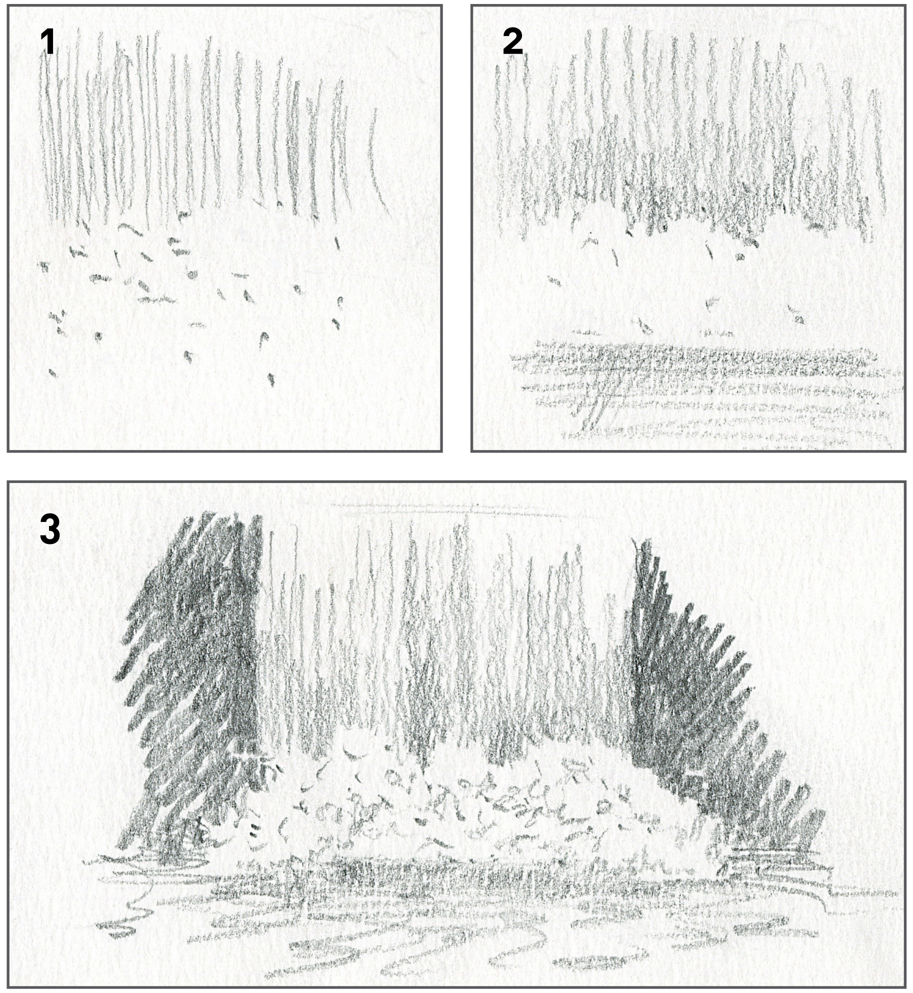
Waterfalls, weirs, and stormy seas are all examples of fast-moving water. Their chaotic nature makes them seem complex and confusing to capture from life, but if you pause and stop trying to follow the flow of the liquid, you can see the general form of the body of water. A river is defined by its banks, and while a waterfall might foam wildly, it is contained within a certain area.

The important thing is to simplify the scene – don't try to capture every wave, or every droplet of foam. Instead, suggest the movement with a lightness of touch.



Tumbling water

Here, an effect of tumbling water is achieved merely by drawing the directional marks for the flow of the water, until it bursts into a foaming mass, which is suggested by a few dots within a white space.



Waterfall

This quick pencil exercise shows how quick and easy it is to draw a waterfall.

1 Fast-moving water usually appears white and foamy. Suggest the direction of the falling water with vertical strokes, and hint at the shape of the foam by leaving an area below clean, marked only with a few dots.

2 Shade above and below the foam increases the illusion of a waterfall.

3 Add dark areas on either side of the water to creates tonal contrast and suggest the shape of the waterfall. Use a few light swirling marks to indicate the fast-flowing water downstream.

Rapids

Outline 8

This exercise will help you draw a stream tumbling over and down a rocky hillside in Cumbria, UK.

You will need

2B, 3B and 4B graphite pencils
Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
Putty eraser

1 Transfer the outline to your paper, then use the 2B pencil to lightly shade the rocks with hatching. This helps to distinguish them from the water passages. Use cross-hatching for darker areas, which will create more contrast and make the water stand out more clearly.

2 Spend a few minutes considering how the water finds its way down the image. Start at the top of the watercourse and follow it down, working out where the areas of falling water are, and where the flatter pools of water sit. Using the 3B pencil, add slightly curved, near vertical strokes for the falling water, and add light stippling where the areas of falling water end, to represent foam.

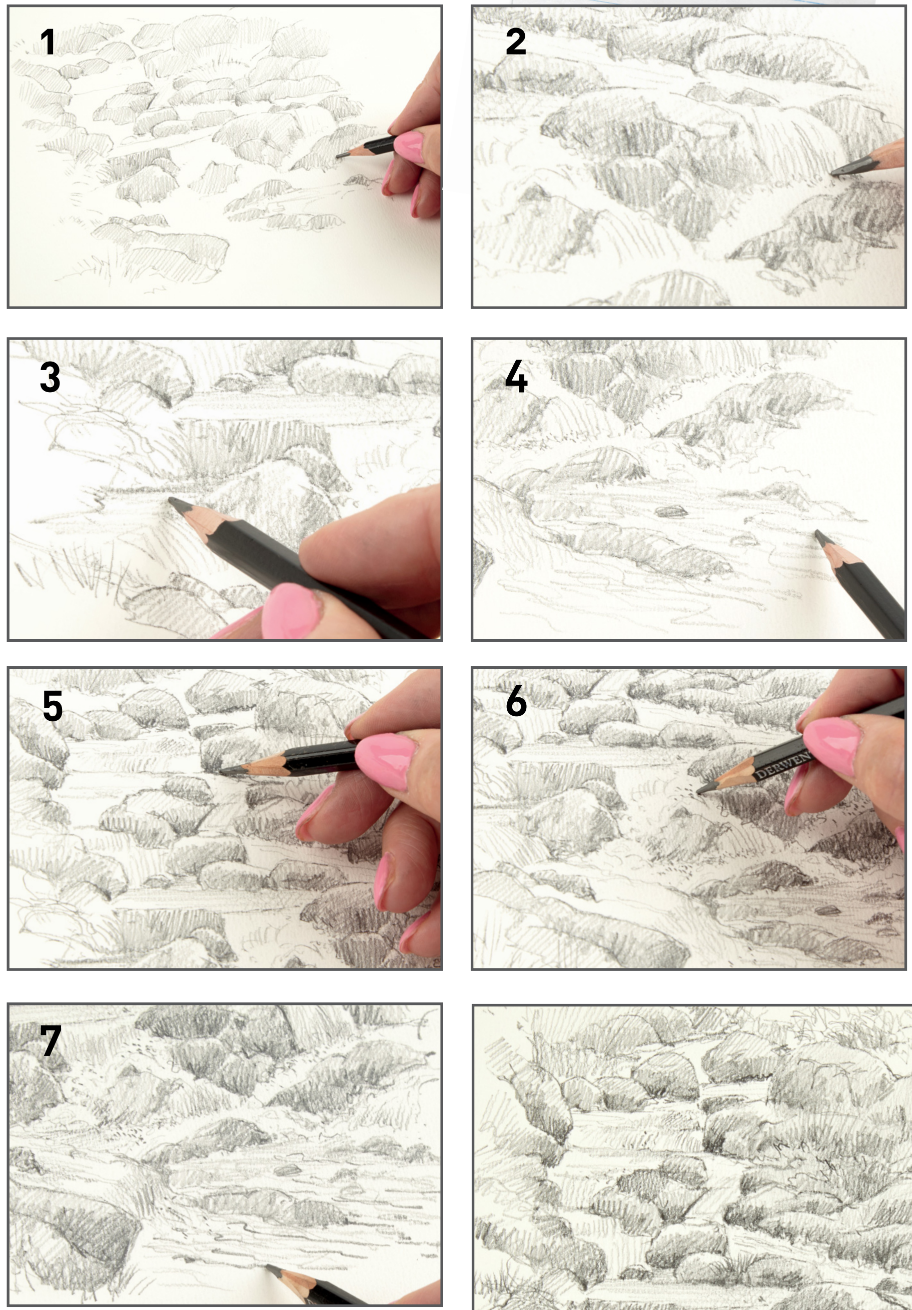
3 Use wavy horizontal strokes for the pools of water lower down the course. Keep these light in tone, and leave some clean to suggest brightness.

4 For the water skimming over the rocks at the bottom of the course, use more wavering lines.

5 Switch to a 4B pencil. Starting from the top of the watercourse again, darken the boundaries between the water and the rocks, to add more definition and contrast between the rocks and water.

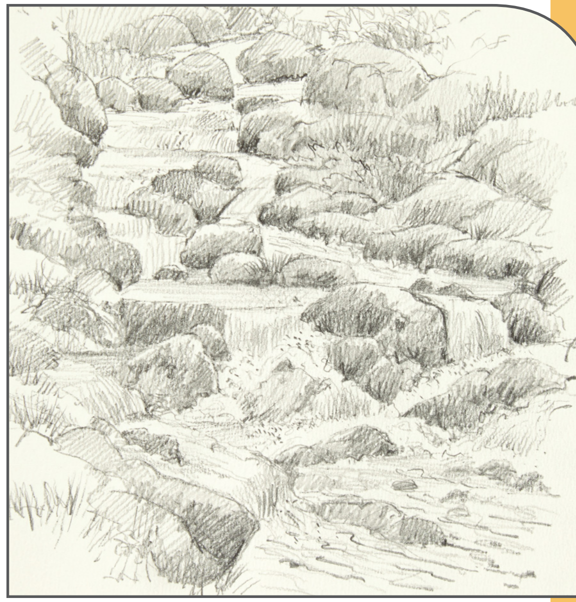
6 Continue working down the course, and reinforce the stippling on the foam.

7 Add a few stronger, more animated marks on the surface of the water, particularly nearer the foreground.



Tip

The water needs to remain light in tone. If you over-darken an area, you can use an electric eraser to gently lift some of the graphite and lighten areas.

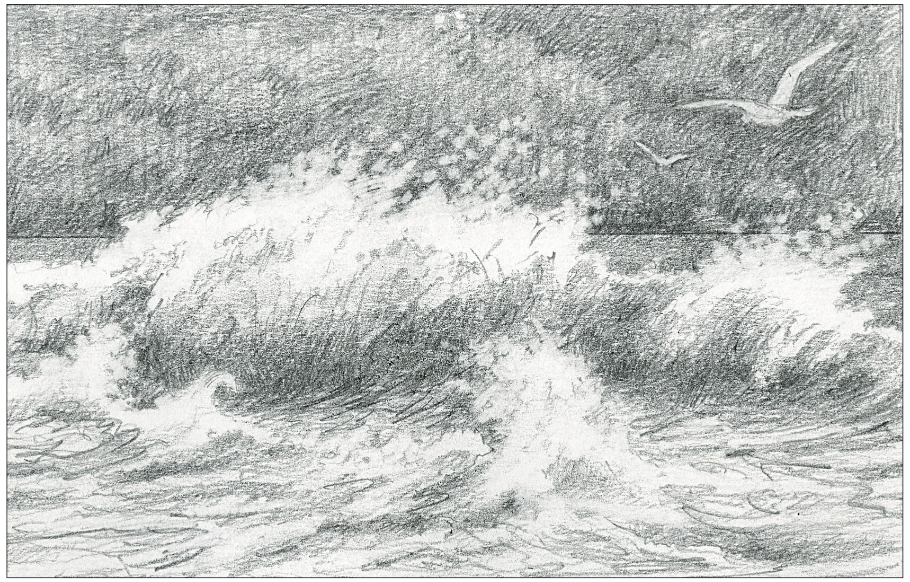


The finished drawing

The sea

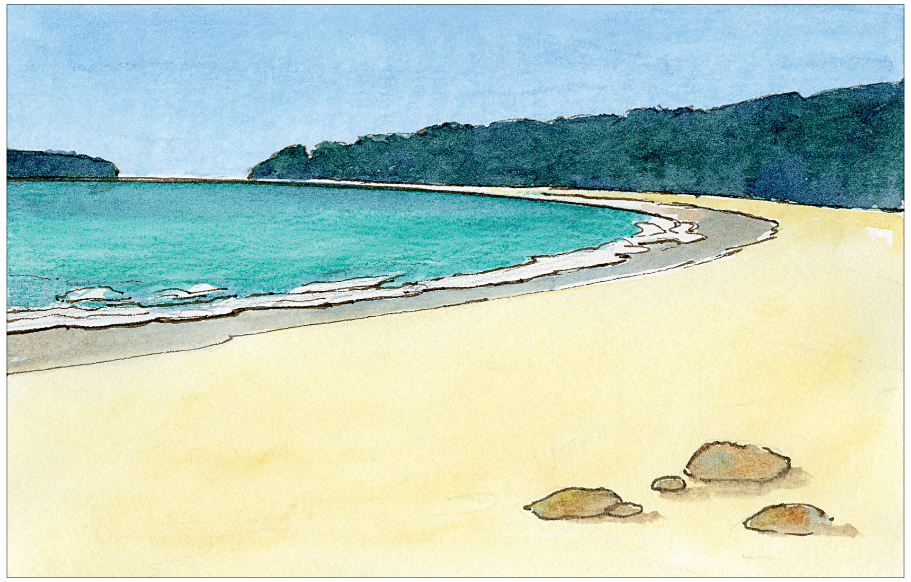
The sea is as changeable as the sky – one day flat and calm, the next day a stormy tempest. Because it is constantly moving, it can be quite challenging to draw. It is often easier to work from a photograph, so that the ripples and waves can be studied at length. Whether you are drawing or painting the sea in Australia or Anglesey, the principles are the same.

Here are some examples of the sea in various moods.



Rough Sea, Brittany

This pencil drawing depicts a dark, stormy day, with a strong wind whipping up the crest of the waves. The challenge here was to show enough contrast to make the waves stand out and create lots of movement in the water. I introduced the seagull from another source to give life and interest.



Australian Beach

I have simplified this scene, made with brown permanent pen and water-soluble pencils, to show how the shape of the beach is a shallow elliptical curve. The pale sand, which forms the greater part of the foreground, disappears to a mere sliver at the far side of the bay, whereas the tideline (the grey band) is thicker on the edge of the curve, and thinner nearer to us.

Beach Scene

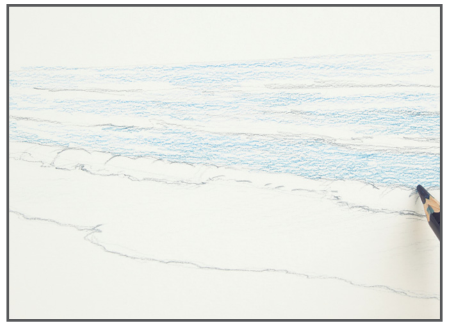
In this example of a calm sea drawn using water-soluble pencils, waves break gently on the pebbly beach.

You will need

- Medium surface cartridge pad 220gsm (110lb)
- Water-soluble pencils (Derwent Inktense): indigo 1100, iris blue 0900, sea blue 1200, baked earth 1800, willow 1900, mustard 1700
- Size 6 watercolour brush



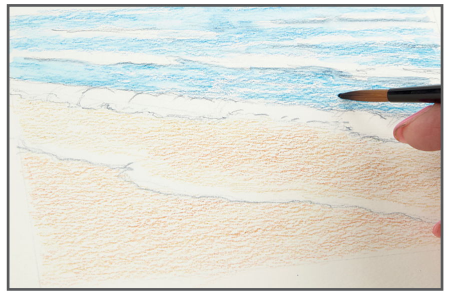
1 Draw the waves using the indigo pencil. Add some swirling marks in the background to represent the sea.



2 Using the sides of the iris blue and sea blue pencils, add some colour in the sea. Leave a few lighter areas of clean paper for highlights on the sea. Bring the darker sea blue down to the top of the wave.



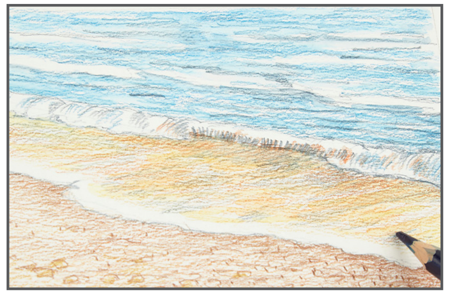
3 Use the mustard pencil to build up the colour of the beach visible through the retreating water, leaving a clean white area near the edge for foam. Add the dry beach area with mustard, then switch to the baked earth pencil to vary the hue.



4 Wet the size 6 brush with clean water and use the tip to selectively wet the sea area, using strokes that follow the angle of the sea. Leave some of the pencil marks showing – particularly on the right-hand side and nearer the viewer.



5 Wet some areas of the wet beach sand beneath the retreating water, then use the willow pencil to darken the dry beach area, particularly near the foam of the retreating wave. Build up some more textural round marks for larger stones, and some stippling for sandy texture.



6 Use the indigo pencil to draw a few curved marks on the white foam to represent the curl of the wave. Add additional marks in the sea using the sea blue and indigo pencils, then add sea blue and baked earth touches over the wet sand.



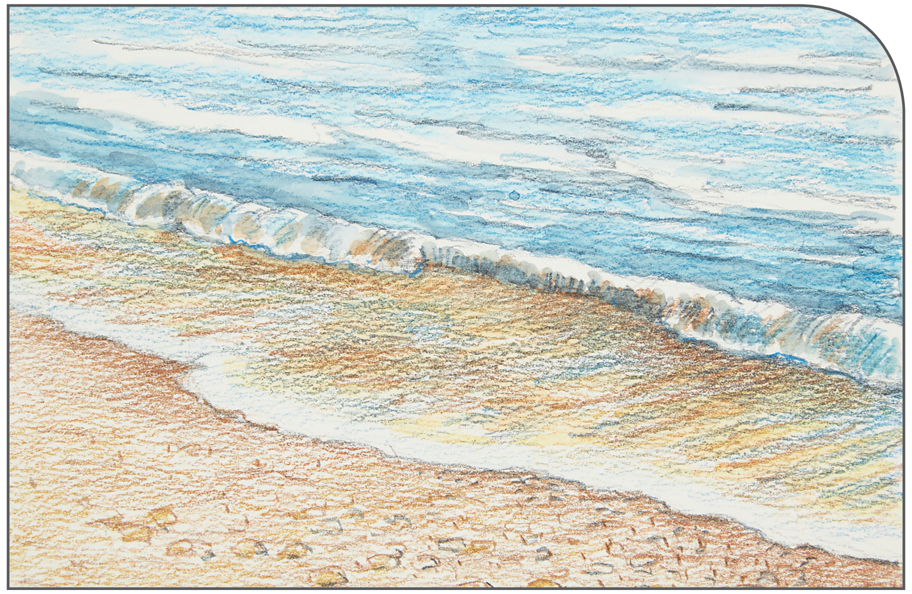
7 Wet the brush again and soften the marks on the wave. Use short curving brushstrokes that follow the pencil lines.



8 Soften the sea behind the wave using the wet brush, then build up the wet sand area with iris blue. This helps to tie together the different parts of the drawing.

Tip

If you find you have not added enough colour with the pencils, you can add it wet with the brush. On a spare part of the paper, scribble a small amount of the relevant colour, then use a wet brush to wipe over it. This will pick up a little colour that you can then paint on.



The finished drawing

Composition

Composition is the design or layout of a drawing or painting. As you continue to draw it may become an increasingly important element in your work. As well as determining the ideal position for a strong horizontal or vertical element, the composition can suggest emotion, power, balance or tension. Negative spaces can be of prime importance, or darks outweigh light areas in an abstract way. Try to look at the work of great artists to gain a broader understanding of good composition.

The rule of thirds

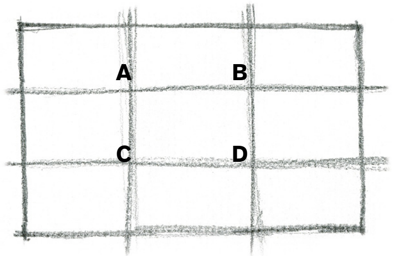
Artists in the Renaissance period invented a system of 'divine proportions' which became known as the Golden Section (or Golden Mean). It was thought to 'possess inherent aesthetic value because of an alleged correspondence with the laws of nature.'

The Golden Section divided the picture plane into circles and rectangles which distilled into the ratio of approximately 8:13. Luckily for us, this has been further simplified into the much easier to use 'rule of thirds'.



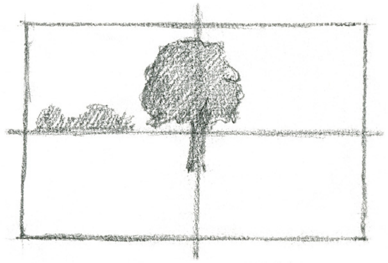
Poor composition

While well-observed, this sketch has no focal point, meaning the viewer's eye wanders aimlessly, giving an unsatisfactory result.



Example of the rule of thirds

The picture is divided into thirds, horizontally and vertically. Where the lines cross are what is termed as 'focal points' (marked with A, B, C and D). These are ideal positions to place something you wish to be an important feature of the study.



Avoid the centre

Try to avoid putting a strong horizontal or vertical in the middle if the picture. This can divide the composition into equal halves, which lacks interest. Compare this with the version to the right.

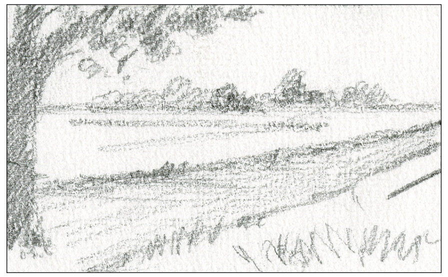


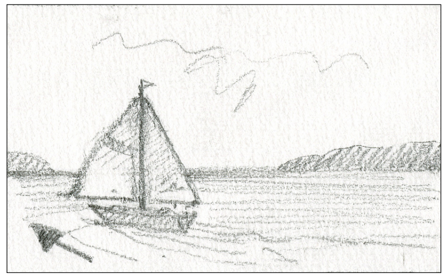
Applying the rule of thirds

In this improved composition, the horizon is a third of the way up from the base of the drawing and the tree a third of the way in, a much more satisfying layout.

Hallmarks of good composition

Spend a little time planning your work before you begin – it will save time and effort in the long run, and give better results. The examples here show a few various dos and don'ts when designing your drawing.



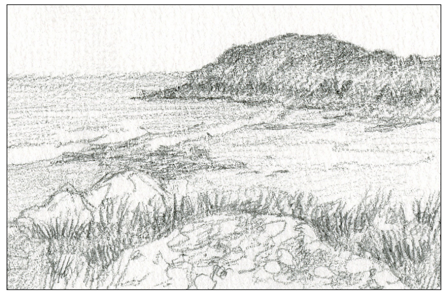


Leading the eye

Although the horizon is well positioned in the landscape on the left, the tree that stands at the edge of the image leads the eye out of the picture. The lane disappearing off to the right does the same thing. It would have been better to move the tree in from the edge, and place a bush on the right-hand side forming a 'stop' to prevent to eye being drawn out of the picture.

In the seascape on the right, the boat is sailing out of the picture, taking with it the viewer's attention. A better composition might be to transpose it, making it sail into the composition.





Visual stops

In the left-hand example above, this splendid dry stone wall unfortunately forms a barrier to the view beyond. Sometimes it is difficult to avoid such circumstances when taking reference photographs, but this can easily be rectified using 'artistic licence' when you draw – feel free to move things around to make more agreeable compositions.

The large rock in the foreground of the seascape on the right creates a hurdle to get over or around before we see the view of the coast. Also, its shape echoes that of the far headland, thus detracting from the main subject of the drawing. The solution is to decrease the size of the rock, or move it to the right, or do both.





Portraits: leave sufficient space

When drawing a portrait, place the head with more space in front of the face than behind it. Compare the left-hand example, where the subject is central, to the right-hand example, where the figure is placed left of centre, with more space in front than behind the head. This allows the subject to look into the picture area, and not out of it.

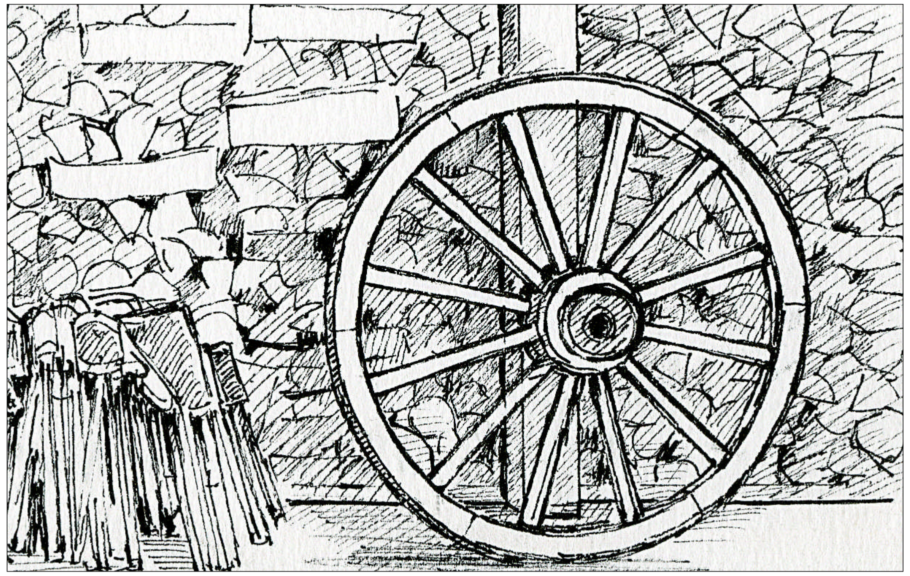
Compositional examples

These varied examples demonstrate the principles explained on the previous pages.



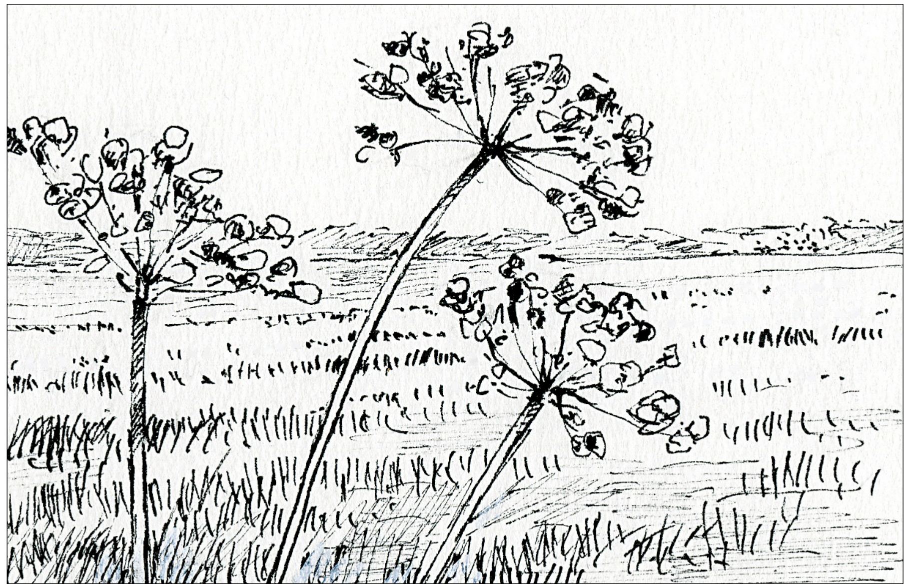
Horsey Mill

The positions of the mill and horizon follow the rule of thirds proportions to make a satisfying, balanced composition. The curving line of the mere brings the eye back around towards the mill, which is accentuated by the small black barn.



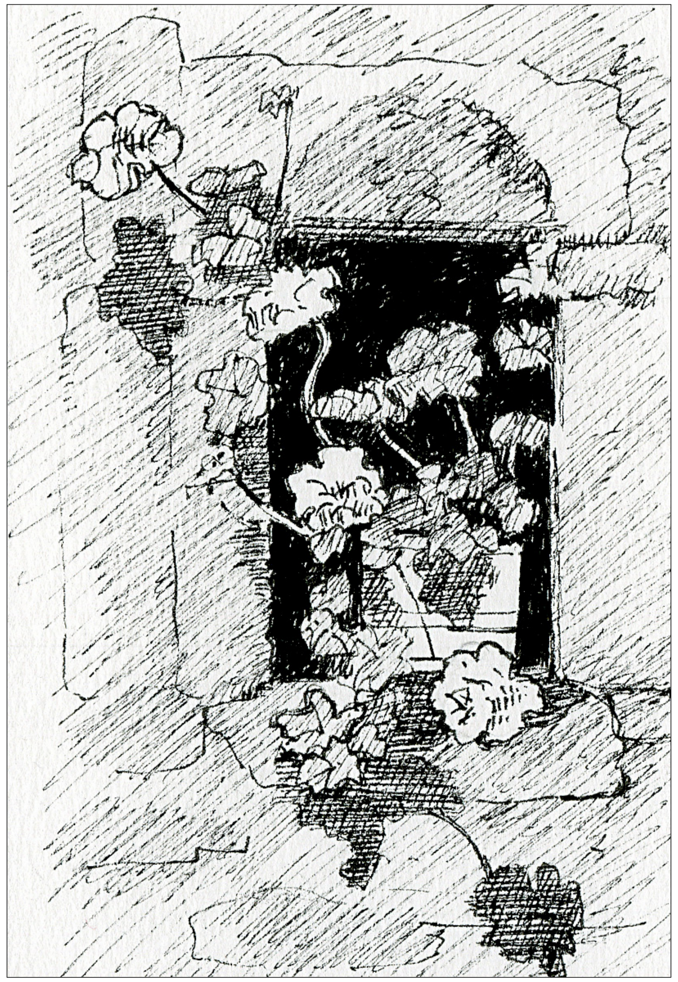
The Log Pile, Painting Stools and Cartwheel

I like the abstract composition, the shapes and textures of this study. The centre of the wheel forms the focal point of the composition, lying a third of the way in and a third up in the composition, thus following the rule of thirds proportions.



Winter Fields

I used two photos to create this composition. The horizon is high, with the three dried seed heads both above and below it; they are set to the left, but arch across to the right making a pleasing composition.



Geranium Niche

The rectangular stone niche is in the same proportion as the frame of the drawing itself. Rather than placing it centrally, I have positioned it off-centre to make a more interesting composition.



Cumbrian Walk

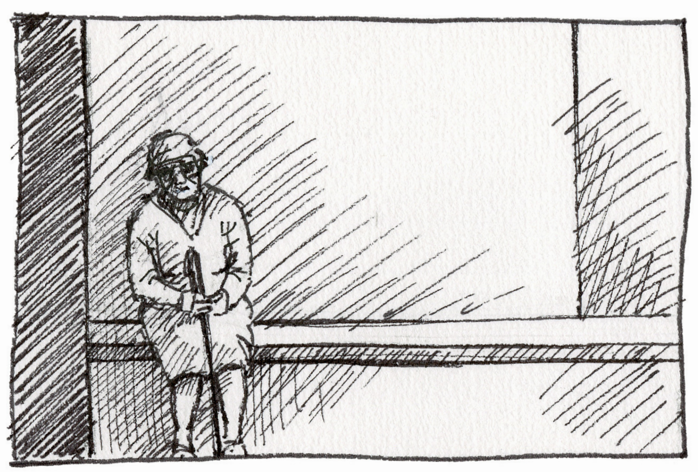
The converging lines of the wall, stream and well-trodden track lead the eye into the picture. As well as forming a focal point, the figures give life to the landscape and add a sense of scale.

Format

The format of a drawing is the way it is set out. The most common formats for drawings, photographs and paintings are portrait – upright, tall and narrow – or landscape – wider than it is tall. There are other formats; square, panoramic and so forth, and the way you choose to set out or frame your work can be an important factor in creating emotion or emphasis.

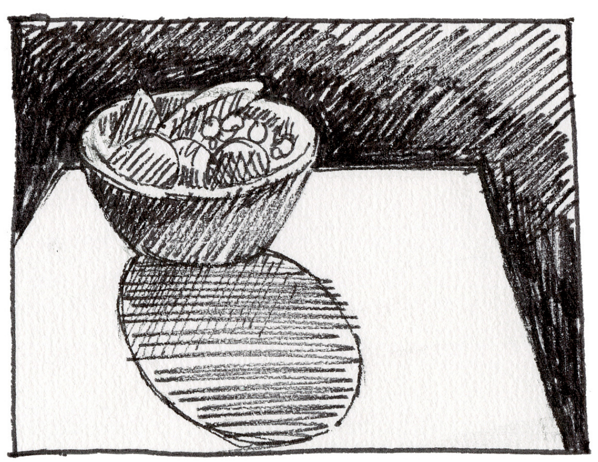
We have seen in the section on sketching that a viewfinder is extremely helpful in selecting a view. It also helps in deciding whether to choose a portrait or a landscape format.





Format for mood

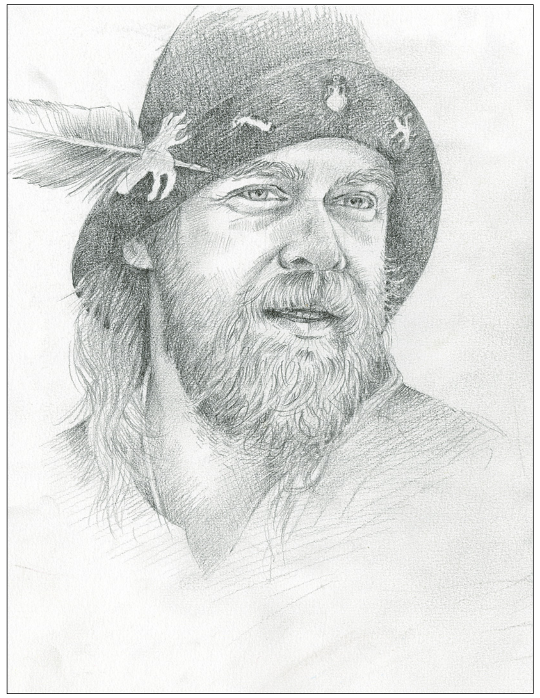
Using the portrait format we see an elderly lady sitting on a seat. However, by using a landscape format and placing her to the left of the composition, the empty space now created infers a sense of isolation and loneliness.



Format for space

Here, the landscape format produced some interesting negative shapes in the background. However, after doing several thumbnail sketches playing with the layout, I was far happier with the portrait format which allowed more 'breathing space' in the drawing. I liked the interplay of abstract shapes with the dark vertical block contrasting with the round bowl and elongated elliptical shadow. However, this is a purely personal choice, and you may prefer the landscape format.





Study of Man in Hat

In a portrait study, choice of format can convey different things about the subject. I used a telephoto lens to snap this interesting character from quite a distance, and then chose a close-up view for the drawing, concentrating on his features, his look and character. Another, more general, view that included more of him and the background might have expressed more about his pose or his interaction with those around him.



Place des Jacobins, Dinan

In this black pastel pencil sketch, I liked the contrasting shapes of the triangular umbrellas with the strong vertical lines and rectangular shapes of the background buildings. I debated as to whether it should be landscape or portrait format but decided the latter echoed the shapes of the long, tall buildings behind.

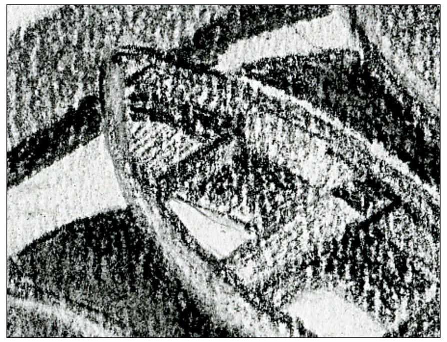
Compositional contrasts

This scene depicts a row of fishing boats viewed from above. If we analyse the composition, it is quite abstract, with two converging curves encompassing the boats, and the 'yin and yang' of two distinct contrasting halves: the dark upper half and the light lower part. This, I believe, all contributes to an interesting, unusual composition.

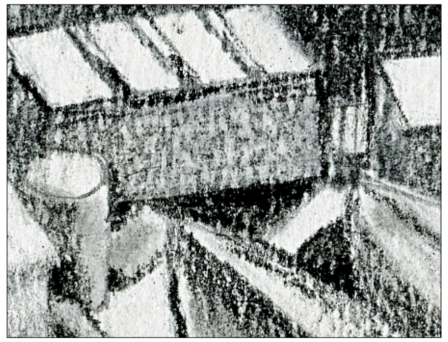
The details here will draw your attention to some of the more interesting areas that you can use in your own compositions.



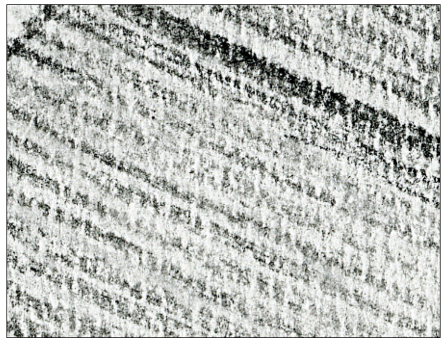
A The dark background against the bright, sunlit foreground creates a strong, eye-catching contrast.



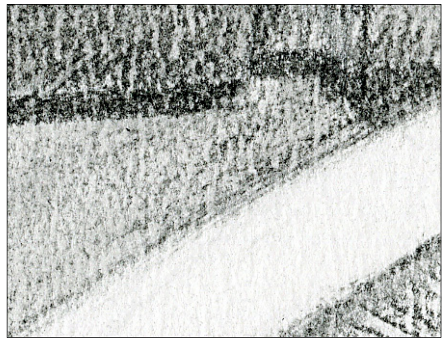
B The boats, which are the main feature of the composition, are more detailed than the other features.



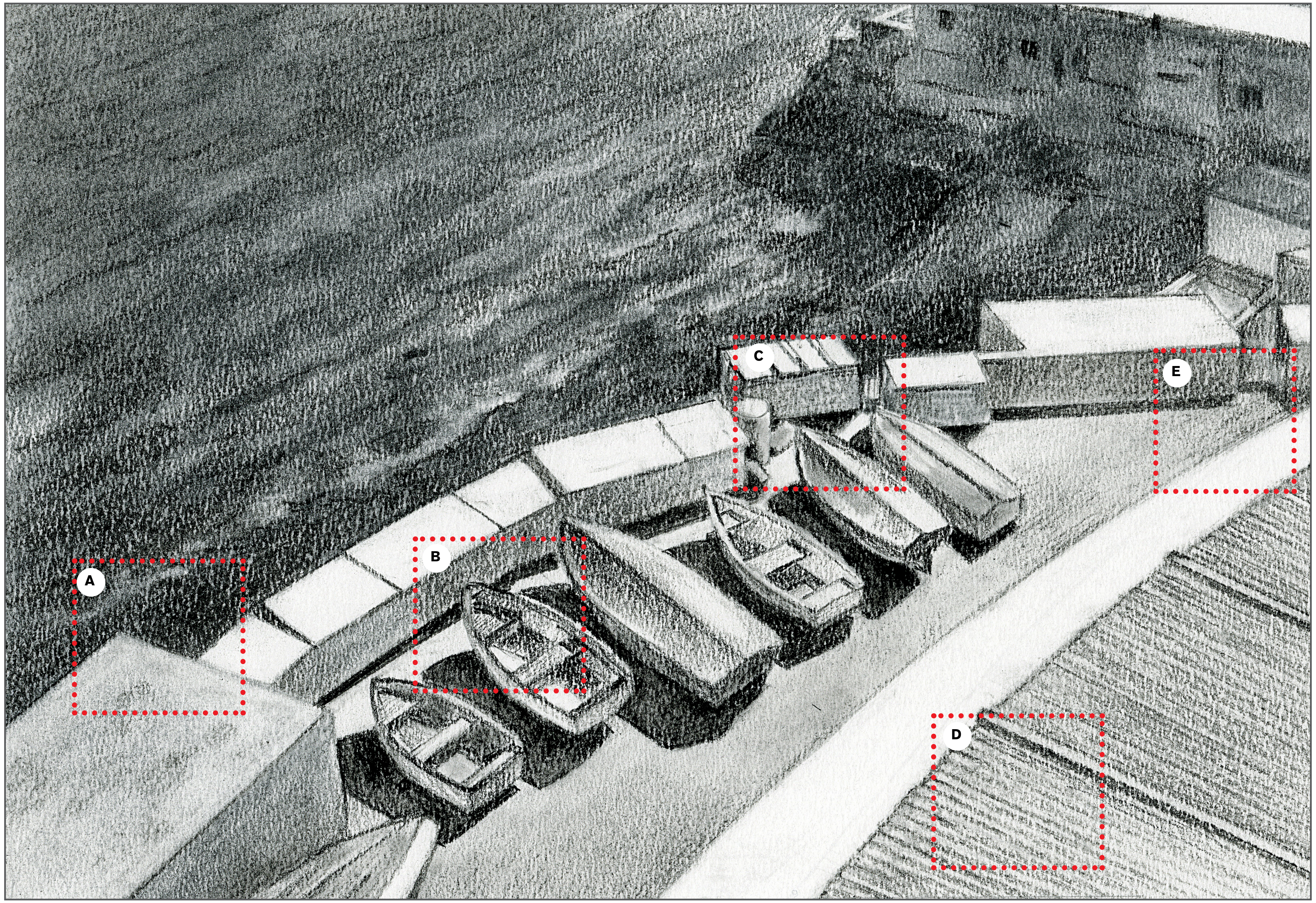
C Interesting contrasting shapes – rectangles, triangles and circles – all appear in this area, creating visual interest to contrast with the large, calm sea.



D The ridges in this area lead the eye into the picture.



E The two curved lines that lead the eye through the drawing converge here, acting as a stop that helps to prevent the viewer's eye from drifting out of the picture.



Outline 9

Valetta, Malta

If you would like to recreate this picture, you will need some willow charcoal or a light charcoal pencil, a black pastel pencil, a cotton bud or torchon, a kneadable eraser and a ruler.

After making the drawing with the pastel pencil, apply the charcoal to produce the light grey areas, smudging it in with your finger, the cotton bud or the torchon. Build up the sea and the background buildings with additional layers of charcoal, then lift out the lighter ribbons to create the waves with the kneadable eraser.

Draw the boats more precisely using the black pastel pencil, then add the dark, clearly defined shadows. Next, use the ruler to generate lots of fine, near-parallel but slightly radiating lines for the roof texture. To finish, clean up the white areas with the kneadable eraser.

Aerial perspective

As objects recede they become paler and less detailed. Conversely, something close-up will have more tonal contrast and more texture. Using these effects creates the illusion of distance on a two-dimensional piece of paper and is very effective for drawing both landscapes and cloudscapes.



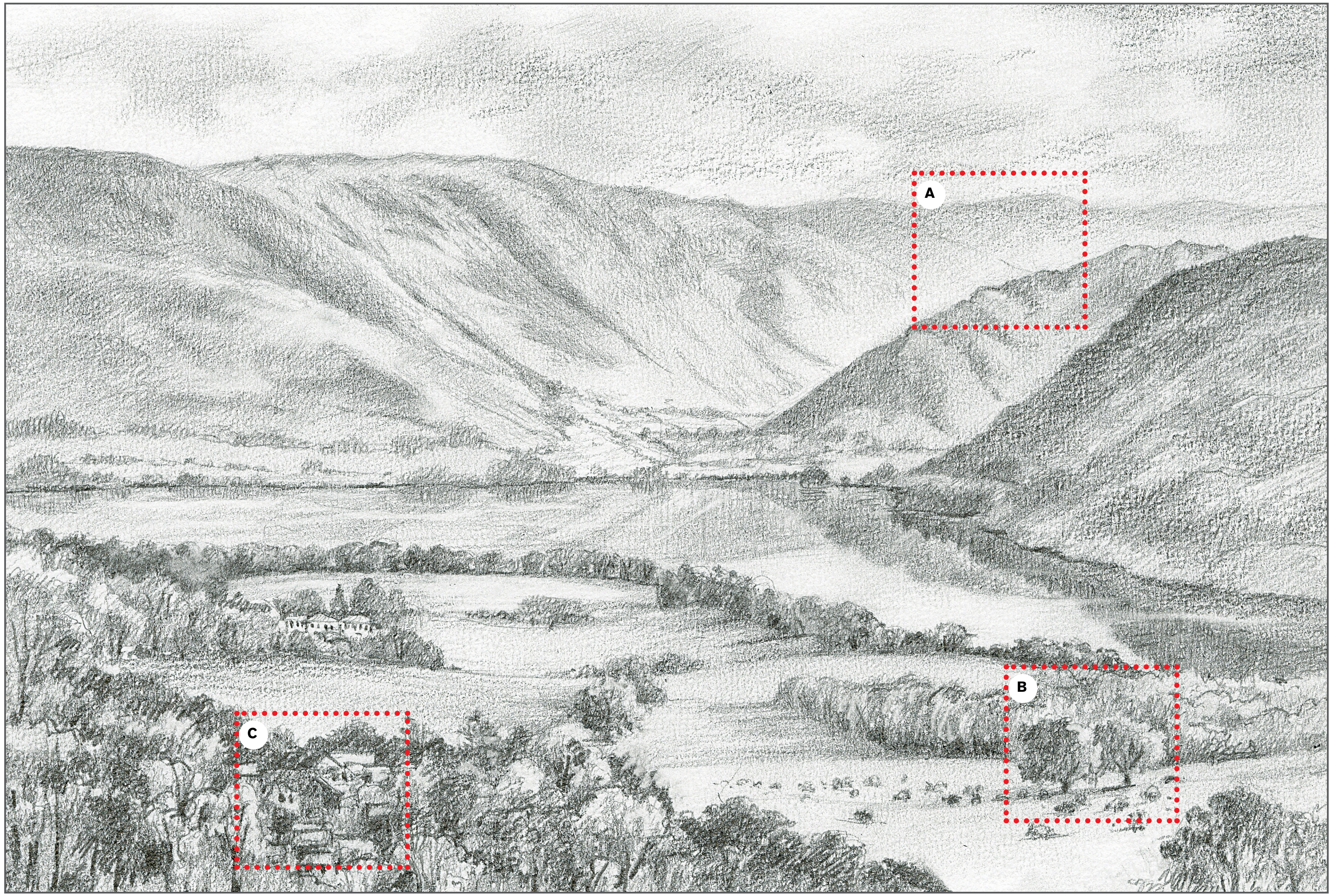
A The distant hills are very pale, and recede behind the hillside which is a little nearer. Even though the nearer hill is a little darker, there is not much detail here.



B There is more detail in the middle distance, but it is kept to a minimum using a mid-grey for the darker trees.



C The area nearer to us has more texture; I used a 4B to create some of the darks, adding weight to the tree trunks and shading.



Outline 10

Cumbrian Landscape

To recreate this picture you will need HB, 2B and 4B graphite pencils plus a kneadable eraser.

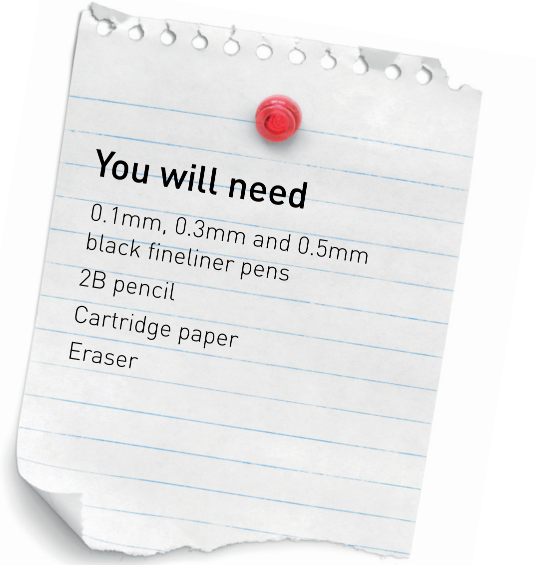
After sketching the scene lightly with the HB pencil, use a 2B on its side for the sky. Smudge the sky in lightly using your finger to make the soft cloud effect, and lift out the white parts of the clouds with the eraser. Draw the distant fells and reflections with the HB, changing to the 2B for the darker, distant fells.

Draw the right hand-hill, its reflection and all the trees with the 4B, applying more pressure for the darkest areas in the foreground. Soft greys can be achieved with a little more smudging. Finally, clean any grubby areas with the kneadable eraser shaped to a point.

Working backwards

When working with pen, it is necessary to draw the objects in the foreground first before progressing to the middle ground, and then the background.

If you feel confident you can go straight in with the pen, but with a complicated subject such as this it may be preferable to sketch the position and relative size of the trees in pencils first.



Outline 11

Foreground

1 Using the 0.3mm fineliner, start by drawing the large tree on the left and the nearest pine on the right. Next, add the sweeping shadows that follow the contours of the undulating forest floor. Dot in some marks to indicate the upper foliage.





Middle ground

2 Add in the tall pines in the middle distance, their shadows and the line of the background trees. At this stage, you should also start to add foliage to help distinguish the different trunks. Using the 0.5mm pen, strengthen the first two trees (see step 1) to make them stand out. This strength of tone helps them appear to advance.

Background

3 With the 0.3mm pen, draw the backdrop of distant trees, but avoid spacing them too regularly. Using the 0.1mm pen, hint at foliage with scribbled marks, attempting to keep detail to a minimum to heighten the effect of aerial perspective.



Finishing the drawing

4 Switching back to the 0.3mm pen, build up lights and darks in the big tree in the foreground, remembering the maxim 'light against dark, dark against light' when branches cross over one another. Draw curved shadows round the trunks and thicker branches. Next, concentrate on refining the middle ground, using the 0.1mm pen. Plot the line of the distant trees, add the long shadows in the background and put in the two figures. Draw in shadows on the right-hand sides of the trees with hatching and cross-hatching; and add foliage to help distinguish one trunk from another. Enhance the shadows between the trees on the right, to make them more prominent. To complete this study, strengthen some of the outlines and added more shading where necessary.



Figures, animals and movement

Placing figures and animals in your drawings can add interest in several ways. Our attention is always drawn to living things, whether they are a lone figure or group of people, sheep, cows, dogs or horses. They create natural focal points, and using this knowledge to plan a specific area of interest in your composition is most valuable.

Figures and animals can also give a sense of scale to your drawings. A tree can be made to look larger if a small figure is placed near it, and similarly a wall could be any height until given something recognisable to measure it against – a figure or animal next to it will serve this purpose. We know the average size of a human or a dog and can measure other objects against these familiar units of size.

If you have tried to draw figures and found it tricky, this section aims to guide you through techniques for drawing people and animals as well as showing you ways of capturing movement.



Outline 12

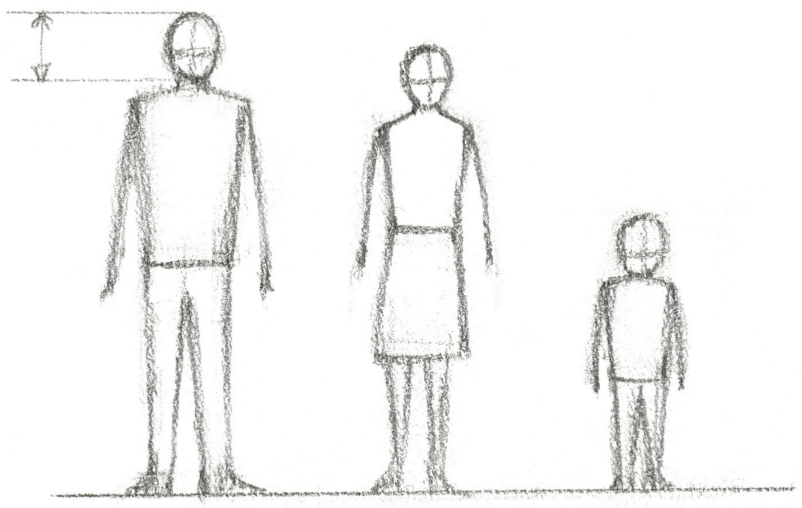
The Deal, Montbrun, Ariège

Black charcoal pencil and white pastel pencils on tinted pastel paper. I sketched this scene of this handsome hippie basket-maker and his children in a market in south-west France, and also took several photos which I used to compose this animated group.

I used light and dark charcoal pencils and added white pastel pencil for the highlights and also behind the main figures to give emphasis to them. I hinted at the buildings and market activity in the background by drawing faintly with the light charcoal pencil.

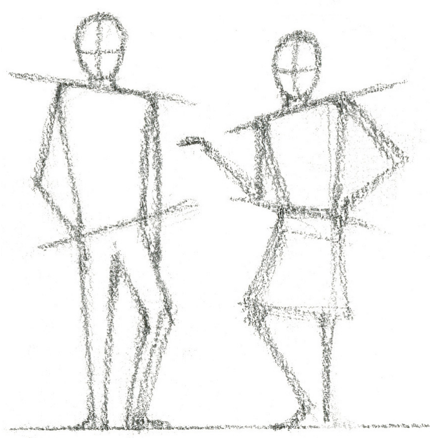
How to draw a figure

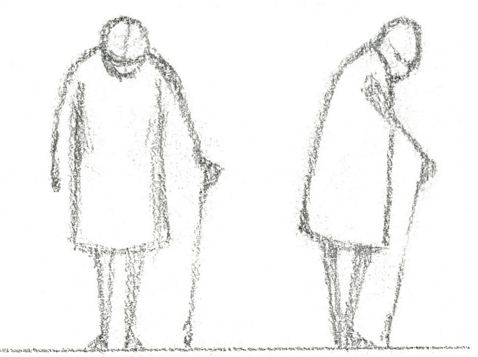
Stick figures are simple to draw, and much less intimidating for a beginner than a photo-realistic figure. They're also a great way to learn about how people move and stand. Practise drawing the stick figures on these pages, then go out and try sketching some figures from life in your nearest town centre or café – you will quickly see how the lessons here can be applied to your own drawings.



Height and proportion

The height of an adult male is roughly seven times the depth of the head; for an adult female it might be six or six-and-a-half times the head depth (depending on their height). For a child, it very much depends on the age – the younger the child, the larger the head in proportion to the body.



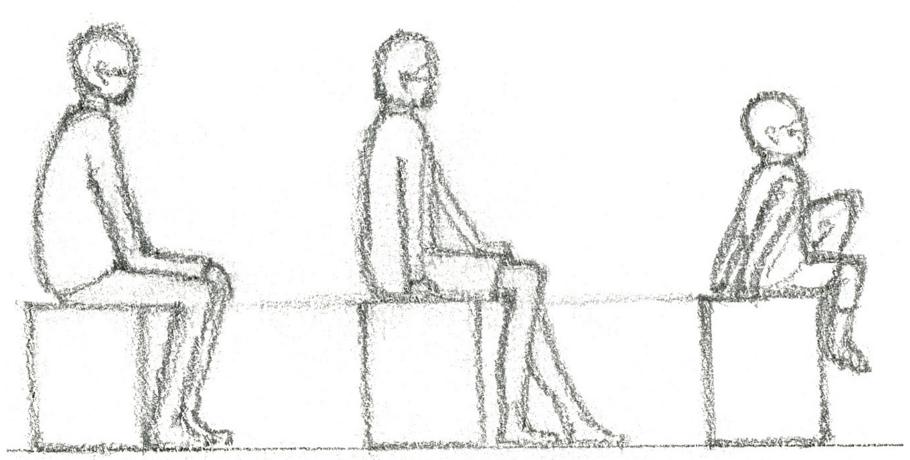


Stance

Observing the angle of the shoulders and hips will help in getting the stance correct.

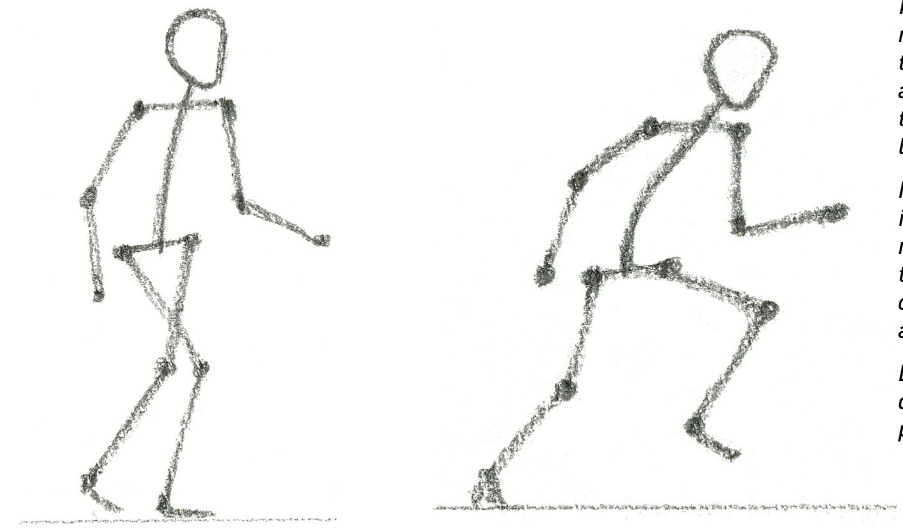
Position of the head

In the examples of stance (see left), the head stands above the line of the shoulders. Drawing the head sunk halfway through the line of the shoulders, as in the examples above, suggests an older person.



Seated figures

On the left are two seated figures: a round-shouldered pose and a more upright one. The right diagram shows how a child might sit.



Moving

The walking figure on the left appears more upright. The head sits over both the shoulders and hips, giving a stable appearance. The spine is nearly upright – though not completely straight, as this would look unnatural.

In contrast, the running figure on the right is leaning forward, with the head appearing more over the front shoulder, and ahead of the hips entirely. Unlike the walking figure, one of the feet is off the ground entirely. This adds up to an unstable, dynamic figure.

Looking for the pivot points, marked here as dark dots, will help you work out the correct positioning for your figures.

Pivot points

Identifying the pivot points of the body will help in analysing and thus drawing the figure. The pivot points are at the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee and ankle joints; and it is also helpful to determine the position of the spine. Once you have established the pivot points, it is then simply matter of clothing the figure.

The diagrams on this page analyse a few stick figures in the midst of different actions, with the pivot points shown as dots.



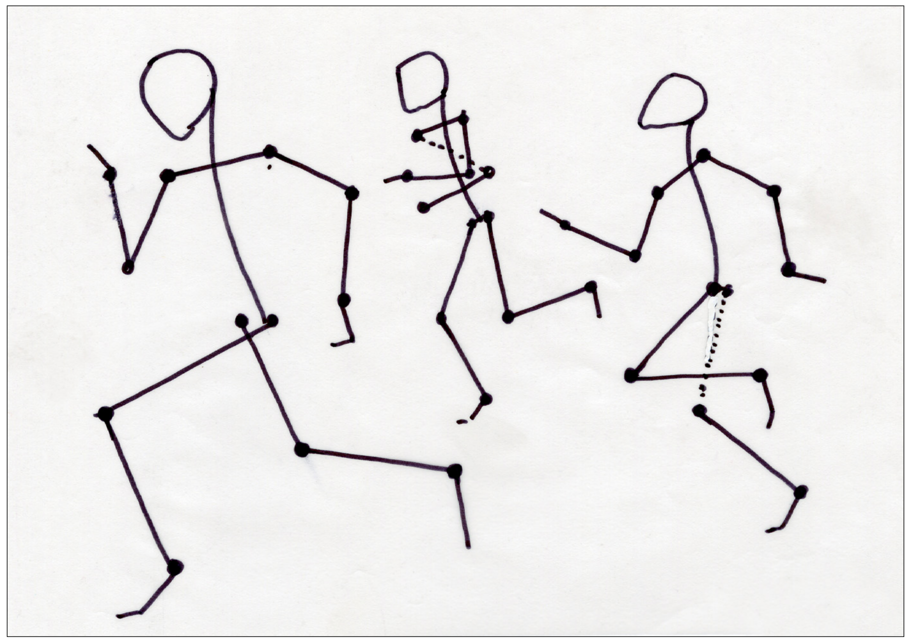
Pushing and pulling

Compare and contrast the positions of the stick figures' pivot points here with each other, then compare them with the running and walking figures above. Spend a few minutes studying and reproducing the figures on these pages to familiarise yourself with the pivot points on stick figures, then have a go drawing similar figures in different positions. You might ask a friend to pose for you.

Points and movement

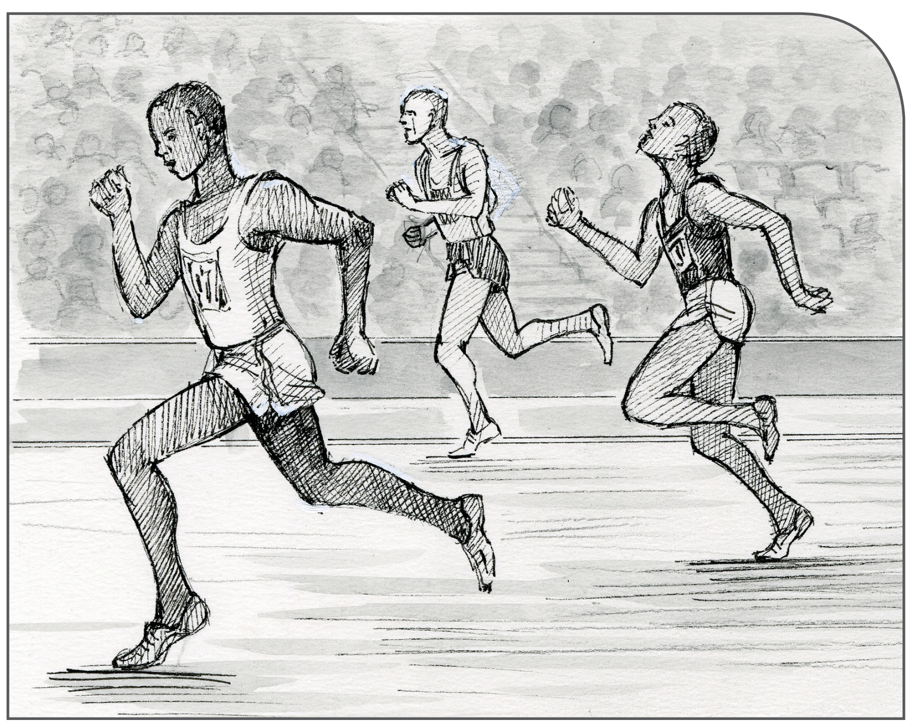
Movement is sometimes hard to convey. Breaking down the figure into its pivot points helps to evaluate the moving body. Using the sports section of a newspaper will give you ample reference material. Place a dot on the joints – the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees and ankles, then draw a line to assess the position of the spine. Join the dots to get the angle of the shoulders, the hips and relative positions of the knees and ankles.

To help create the impression of forward movement, you can create a stick figure, positioning the head in front of the feet. Each of the three running figures below is in a slightly different stance, with one or both feet trailing behind the position of their head.



Pivot points

I analysed the movement of two of the athletes by plotting their pivot points before starting the pen drawing. The head of the lead runner (the leftmost figure) looks slightly down and is above the front foot, creating a feeling of power and determination. In the second two, their heads are in front of their feet, thus increasing the sense of movement – we feel they must bring the next foot forward to stop them falling.



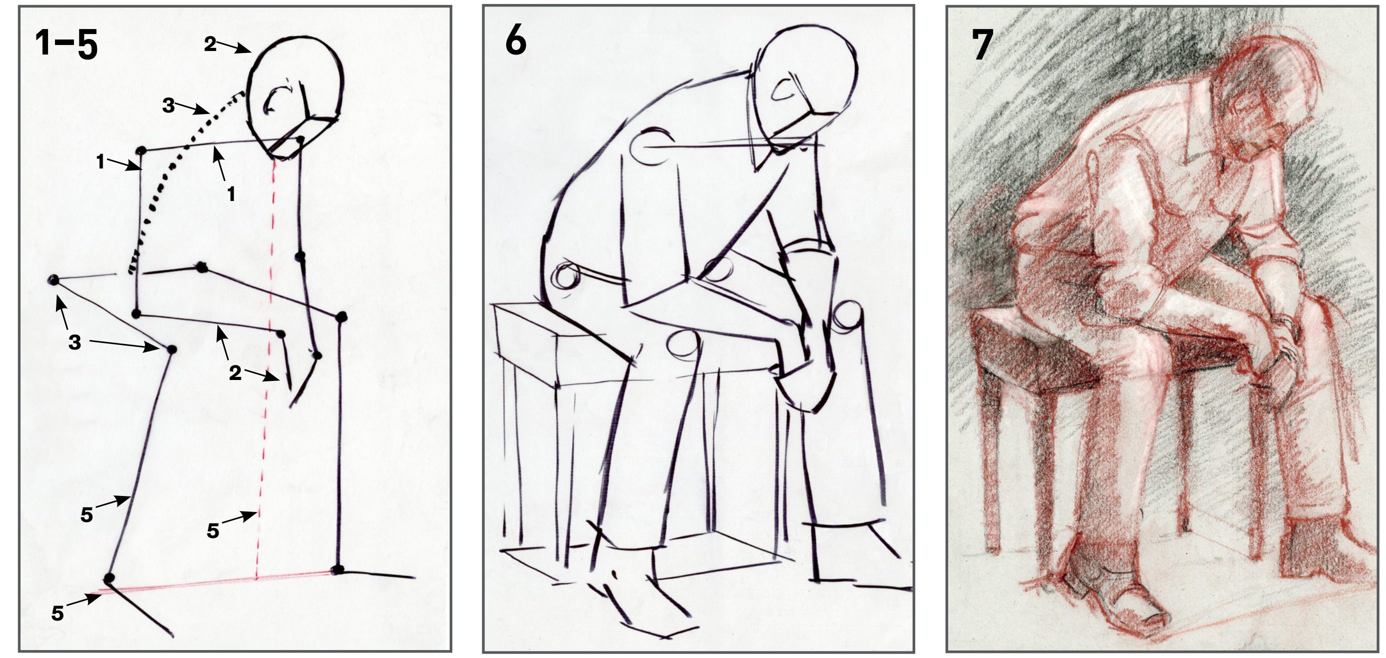
The finished drawing

Horizontal lines behind the runners help give a sense of place and space. I added some pale grey tone with a water-soluble graphite pencil to indicate the crowd and a few parallel lines beneath the feet which were on the track to help 'ground' them.

Figure from life

Working from life is very good practice and can inspire a more spontaneous, lively approach than working from a photograph. If you try this yourself, remember to give your model a break every twenty minutes or so. Mark the position of the model's feet so they can return to the same position.

I worked this drawing over the course of forty minutes using a red chalk stick, but for clarity, the work-in-progress images have been replaced with black-and-white pen versions.



1 Start by drawing a line to plot the angle between the shoulders, marking the pivot points, then add lines for the upper arms down to the elbows. In this example, the distance from the shoulders to the elbows is slightly shorter than the width of the shoulders – note that owing to the figure's pose, his left arm, being more distant, appears shorter than the right. Both elbow pivot points are nearly vertically below the shoulders.

2 Next I drew the head, a tilted three-dimensional 'D' shape, then the forearms and the direction of the hands.

3 While you can't see it directly, it is important to sketch in the position of the spine lightly in order to help position the pivot points for the hips and knees.

4 Having plotted the upper body and pivot points, I paused to check my drawing thus far – the angles and relative lengths of the limbs. I noted that the distance between the right elbow and left hip was only a little longer than that between his elbow and knee.

5 To complete this 'stick man' stage with all its pivot points, measure the angle and length of the legs and then put in the feet. A vertical line lightly drawn from the chin to the floor (shown here as a dotted red line) will help to position the feet.

6 The next step was to flesh him out, by indicating the clothing. Drawing the stool, too, not only gives him something to sit on, but this solid, geometric shape is a useful framework against which to judge negative shapes and the relative position of his knees and feet.

7 As this was a study from life, using the chalk meant I could work quickly without getting bogged down with too much detail. I corrected any errors with a dark brown or black chalk and added highlights with a white crayon. Finally I scribbled some black behind the figure to make him stand out, and darkened the stool to contrast with his legs, thus bringing them forward.

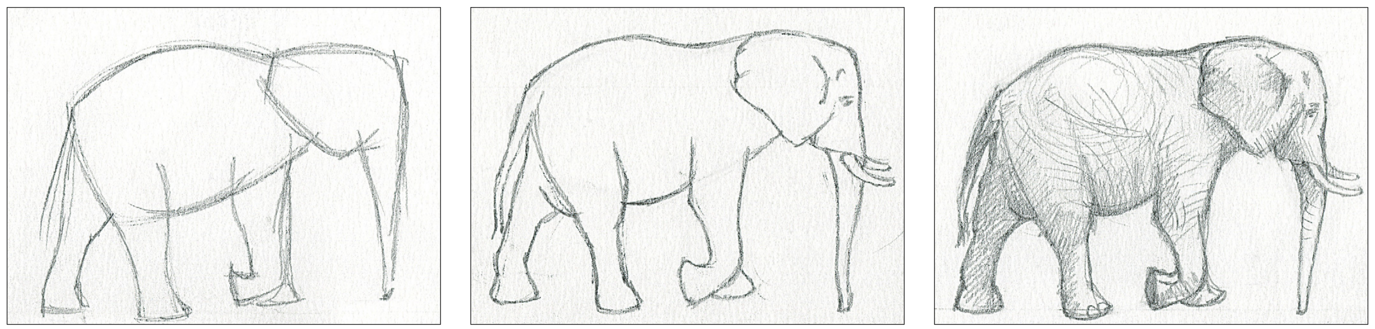
Animals

Like people, animals offer a way to bring life into your drawings. While they take many different forms, the process of drawing them is just like anything else: work out the basic shapes and develop them. Each of these examples follows the same three-stage drawing process:

- Start by looking for simple, basic shapes – circles, ovals, cylinders to represent the body shape of the animal concerned.
- Next, refine the shape, adding more details – the ears, eyes, tail, tusks, creases and so on.
- The third stage is a refining process, improving the shape and form and adding texture – feathers, fur, skin, wool or patterning.

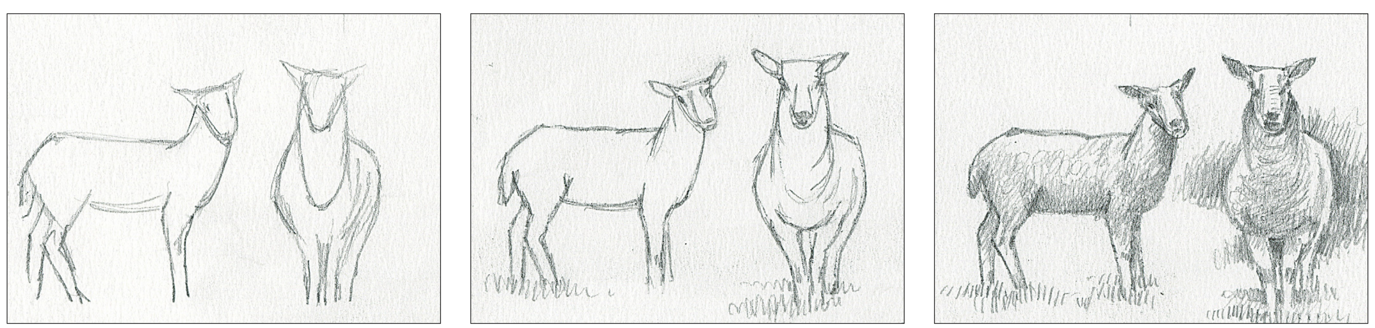
Tip

There is more information on producing textural effects on page 107 – many apply very well to animals.



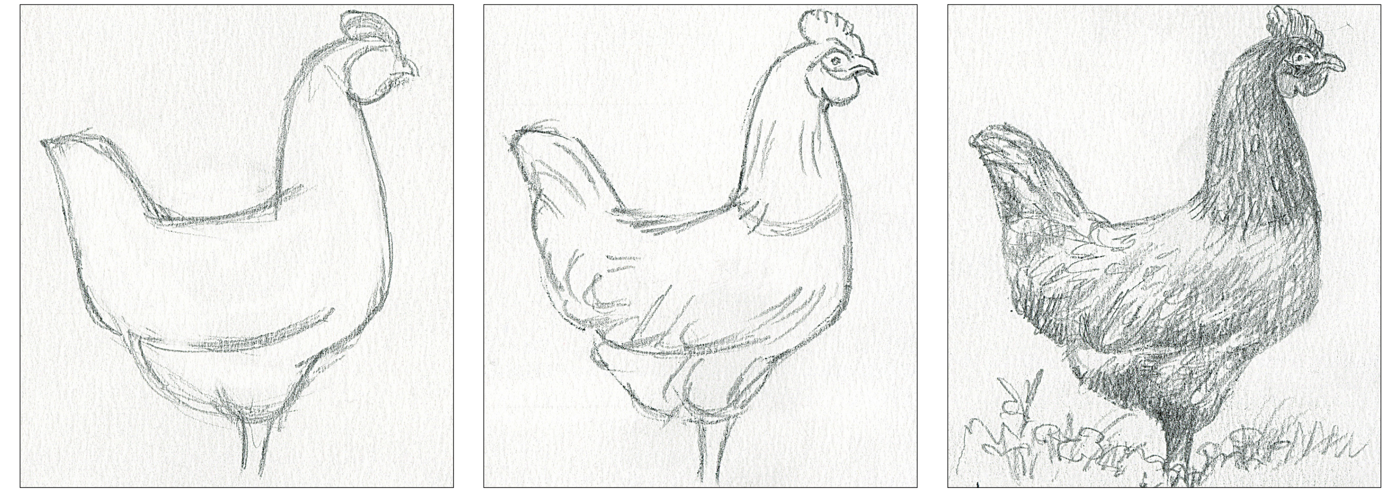
Elephant

Start with the large tilted body shape, then add the head and ear mass, followed by the trunk. Next, add the legs, assessing the negative spaces between each one, and then the trunk. Gradually refine the drawing, then add some shading.



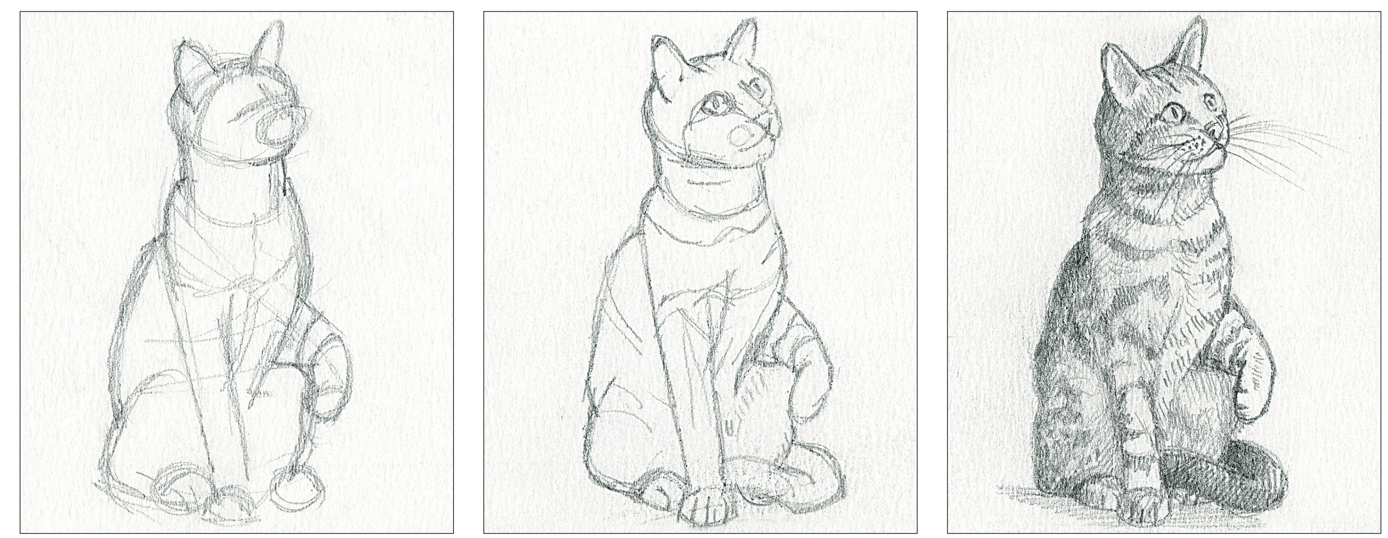
Sheep

I think these were newly shorn sheep as they look decidedly slimmer than one might expect – always draw what is in front of you, not what you imagine. Begin by simplifying the shape of the body, the neck and head, then add the legs. Head-on, the body is nearly circular, the neck is a tube and the head a triangle.



Chicken

Here it is useful to draw the negative space between the neck and tail first, then add the deep sweeping curve from the tail to the underbelly. With this in place, drawing the neck becomes easier. You can add the head last, positioning it a little higher than the tail.



Cat

The cat is more complex to draw than the other animals on this page, but can easily be tackled by simplifying it into a series of circles, ovals and curves. Also, check the proportions of the width compared to its height: the height of the cat (the top of the ear down to the left front paw) is twice the width (from the cat's back to the edge of her right-hand paw).

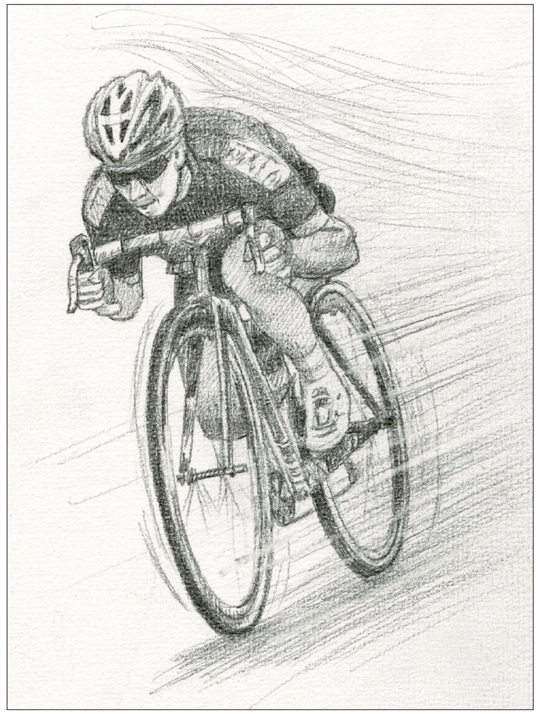
Capturing movement

Before the invention of the camera, most artists would depict horses galloping with the front and hind legs fully extended. It wasn't until the 1880s that Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904), a pioneer of stop-motion photography, was able to analyse their true movement. As a result we now know how to draw the legs of a galloping horse accurately. Today a camera is an indispensable means of arresting the movement of an athlete running, a cyclist whizzing by or dancers flying through the air.

Now that a living element has been added to our drawing, the challenge is to make it look as if it is moving. As well as using a camera to freeze frame the action, movement can be expressed by the marks we make or the way they are applied – swirling, flowing, or emanating from the drawn object.

Animated marks

Look at the following examples to help you add movement to your drawing.

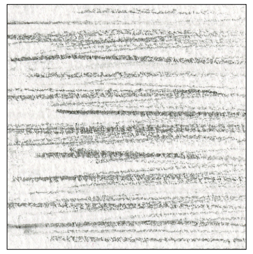






Directional lines

Sweeping, directional lines, using charcoal, are effective at conveying motion. For an example, see page 104.



Speed lines

Multiple lines that lead the eye in a direction the can be used to indicate the directional of travel.

An increased sense of speed is achieved in the picture of the cyclist above by the directional parallel lines and some 'zoom' lines erased through the back wheel.



Motion lines

Lines that echo the shape of an object suggest back-and-forth movement. The hands, arms and head of the accordion player above were all blurred in my reference photo, which helped me decide where the radiating lines should go to give the feeling of movement. In the example to the left, the lines on either side of the dog's tail indicate that it is wagging.

Dancing Girls

With their arms raised to clash their tambourines and their skirts swirling, these dancers are full of lively movement.





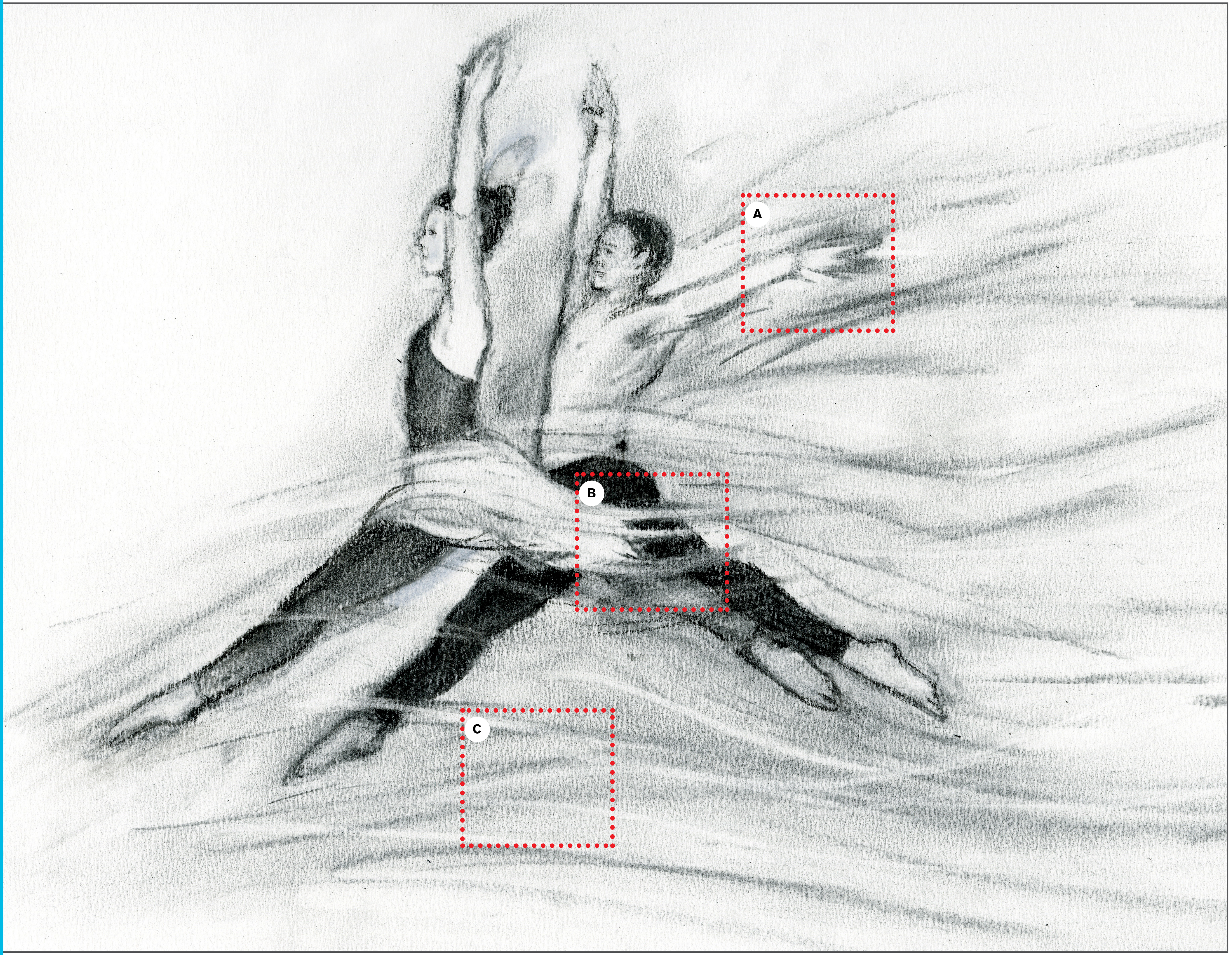
Basket Carrier

Here the movement of the walking figure is further enhanced by the angled baskets which appear to swing as he strides out.



Harvest Time

Movement is implied by the position of the arms of the farm workers; they contrast with the static figures in the background.



Ballet Dancers

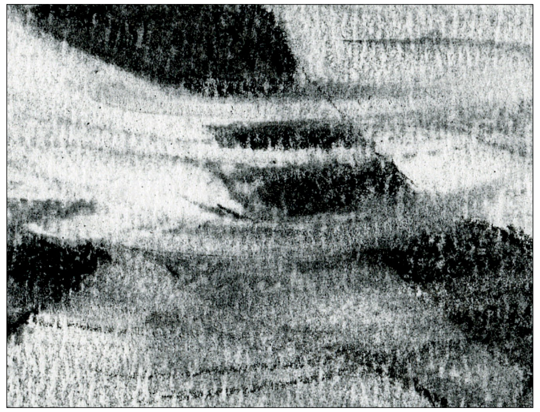
If you would like to recreate this picture, you will need a charcoal stick, black pastel pencil and medium surface cartridge paper.

Expressive motion

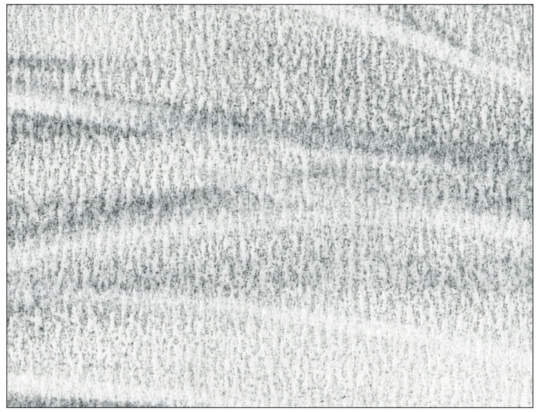
In this soft charcoal drawing, the leaping action alone conveys a great sense of movement; with the dancers' legs outstretched and their arms flung back. To increase the feeling of speed, I introduced curving, flowing lines by smudging the charcoal with a cotton bud (q-tip) and elsewhere by lifting out with the kneadable eraser. I finished by adding black pastel pencil to make some of the darks more intense.



A After drawing the dancers, I superimposed sweeping, flowing lines, from the skirt and behind the male dancer in particular, as seen in this detail. Tracking those lines, I used a kneadable eraser to lift off some flowing marks.



B This detail shows how I smudged some lines in the direction of the movement.



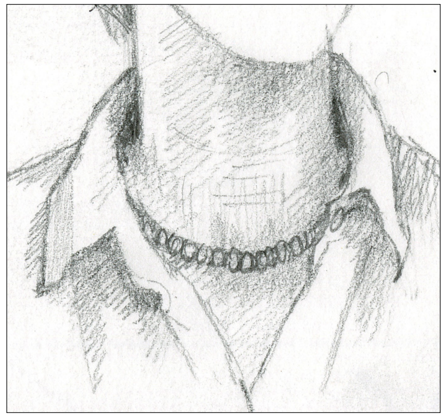
C I repeated the directional sweeping lines in the foreground and behind the male dancer, again lifting lighter marks with the eraser where necessary.

Textures for figures

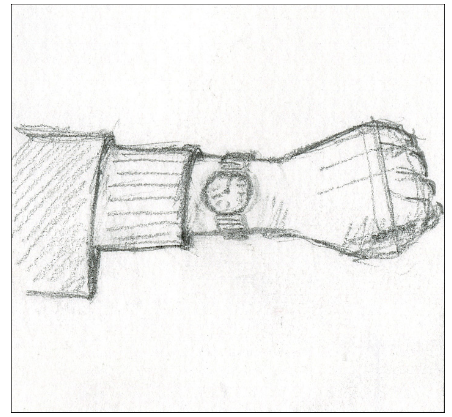
If the figures you are drawing are fairly close up, you may have to draw clothing, hair and perhaps hats too, so here are some examples to help.

Contouring details

You can use clothing and accessories to help describe the shapes of the body. A collar running around the neck helps describe the underlying shape and the fall of the shoulders, for example. Similarly, a watch or the curve of the sleeve enclosing the arm can also help to describe its contour.



The necklace is a useful aid in defining the contour of the neck.



A watch, or the line of a sleeve, can help to demonstrate the curve of the arm or wrist.

Clothing

The way that material wraps around or hangs from the body can help describe the form. Creases can be hard or soft, depending on whether the clothing is loose or tightly stretched over the underlying limb.

Getting a hat to look as if it is actually sitting on the head can be tricky. Draw the oval of the head first, then fit the hat on, with the sides of the hat following the contour of the head shape. Then add the brim or peak of the cap.



Here, the tight creases at the elbow are picked out by sharper, darker marks whereas the upper sleeve has softer, lighter shading.



Examples of hats. Note that they often obscure a great deal of the face.

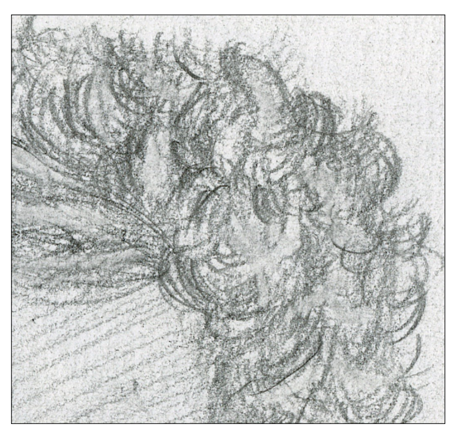
Hair

Begin by making directional flowing lines to replicate the style and length of the hair. Add some darks, where the hair crosses over and lift out highlights with the kneadable eraser.

For curly hair, make short curved marks, then darken and erase some lines to give depth and movement to the hair.



Longer hair



Curly hair

Textures for animals

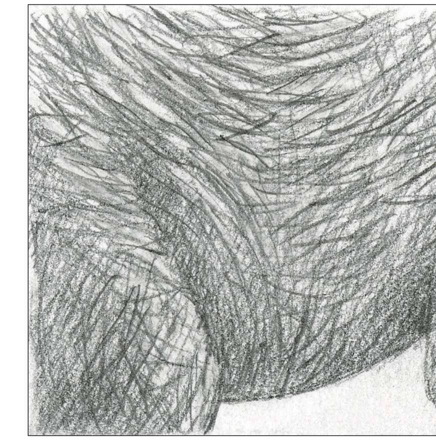
As we have seen in previous chapters, texture is created by building up a series of marks. Analyse the texture to decide whether the marks should be light and feathery or heavy and twisting; and whether you should draw with a delicate touch or apply more pressure. Look at the patterns – are they scribbly or striated, short curves or long convoluted lines?

Look at the examples here, then practise creating texture for yourself.



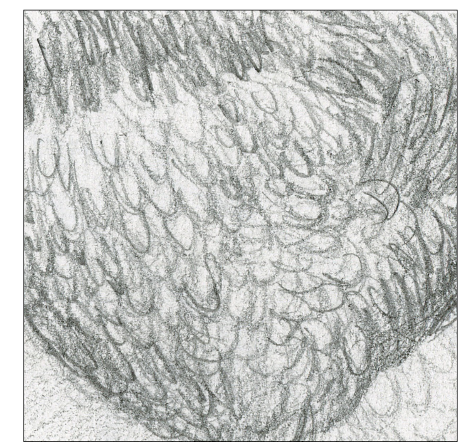
Tabby cat's fur

This cat has soft, short fur with irregular stripes. It is important not to lose the shape of the body when concentrating on the patterning, so I have added shading behind the legs to represent the form under the fur.



Elephant's skin

This is all wrinkles and creases, some following the shape of the body. I built up lines with a 2B pencil, then smudged some in to produce the grey tone before adding heavier directional lines with a 6B. Lots of tiny crossing lines give the wrinkled effect.



Chicken's feathers

Starting in the middle, I built up several overlapping layers of feathers, making them denser towards the edges. Near the neck, the feathers change texture, become longer, darker and more curved. I smudged some of the pencil work to create darker tones then picked out more defined feather shapes in the middle section.



White Dog

White fur or hair on any animal can cause problems as it's all – well, white! I started by making positive curving lines for the wiry hair of this West Highland terrier, adding shading to the ear and chin area then drew in the eye and nose. It was important to keep the overall form whilst creating the texture and flow of the hair. Making the background dark helps to define the ragged outline, giving character to this little dog.

Using Quink ink

Outline 14

Quink ink is a permanent black ink, normally used in fountain pens for writing, but which can also be used for drawing. When water is added, it partly separates into blues and browns creating a somewhat unpredictable effect, which makes it an exciting medium for the artist.



Quink ink, along with some water and a dip pen or brush, is ideal for sketching. You can make a drawing while you are out on location and immediately add water, or wait until you are back home to add the water.



Café Scene, Brighton

Inspired by the bright sunshine flooding through the window, bouncing off the tables and chairs and silhouetting the figures, I wanted to create a contre-jour study of the scene.

I used Quink ink with a dip pen to draw the scene, swapping to a size 8 watercolour brush for the darker shadows. To capture the contrast, I made sure to leave plenty of white areas. While the ink was still wet, I added water, pulling it over some of the drawn lines and creating lighter shadows and the creases on the clothing of the foreground figure. I let this dry before sharpening up some details – the struts of the chairs and the glasses on the table. I used a white correction pen to put in some fine highlights on the chairs and glasses.

I had lost any detail in the foreground figure, so I wetted the area and was able to lift off some ink to hint at her features.

I was pleased with the finished effect; this technique had generated a range of tones and subtle colours and I particularly liked the blotchy chair legs and loose background figures.

Buildings and perspective

Although perspective can be a challenging subject, a basic grasp is essential in creating drawings that look convincing. Formalised into a set of rules during the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, it is a method of drawing that helps to represent the world around us on a flat surface, giving a realistic impression of three dimensions.

In the section on drawing landscapes, we looked at aerial perspective, a way of creating a sense of distance by varying the tones and the marks made. This section covers linear perspective, which uses a series of reference lines to help correctly place and size objects within the image to give the illusion of depth.

These guidelines will converge at a point (or points) on the horizon, called the vanishing point. By using these lines and points, we can make sure that the different elements in the picture are the correct size and angle relative to one another.

Perspective can be a challenging and complex subject. If you are struggling to master it, remember the maxim 'draw what you see, not what you think you see'.

Secondly, bear in mind that the rules are there to guide and not to dictate. The more you draw, the more your eye will become attuned to the demands of perspective and all those other things we have tackled in this book – positive and negative shapes, tonal contrast, composition, still-life drawings, figures and animals, landscapes, trees and skies, and much more.

So keep practising, have fun and – happy drawing!



Dinan, Brittany

Any receding lines above your head will slant down to the eye level and lines below the eye level will slant up towards it. In this study, worked in brown fineliner pen, the eye level is on the same level as the heads of the figures, which makes sense as I was standing to take the photo and the ground was fairly flat, making other people's heads on a par with my own. I was so close to the corner of the building on the left that the profile of its roof is almost vertical.

Buildings in linear perspective

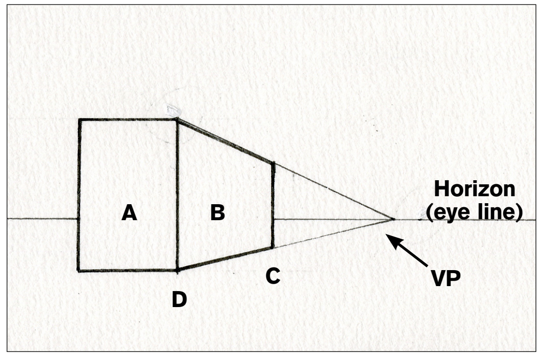
Linear perspective is particularly helpful when drawing the straight lines of buildings. The examples on this page show a some examples of one-point and two-point perspective, with buildings drawn as simple boxes to demonstrate the principles.

One-point perspective

One-point, or single-point, perspective is useful when one side of a building is face-on to you, and another is not. Start by drawing the face-on side, then identify the angles that the top and bottom edges of the other side follow (see page 56 for a technique to identify these angles). Working at these angles, draw faint lines which start at the top and bottom corners of the face-on side and end on the horizon, where they will converge on the vanishing point. These guidelines can then be used to help draw in the rest of the building, as shown in the illustrations on these pages.

Two-point perspective

More often, one corner of the building will be closer to you, and in these cases, each face of the building will recede to its own vanishing point. In these cases, you will need to draw in the corner edge, then draw out the guidelines for each side in turn, as shown below. Typically, two points will provide sufficient guidance to draw most buildings in a landscape.



One-point perspective

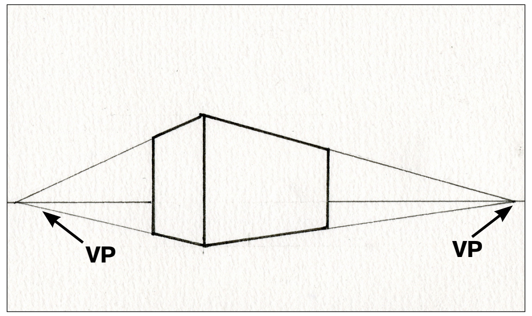
The side of this box marked A is face-on to us, and so is not affected by perspective. The side marked B is affected by perspective because the right-hand edge (C) is further from us than the left-hand edge (D).

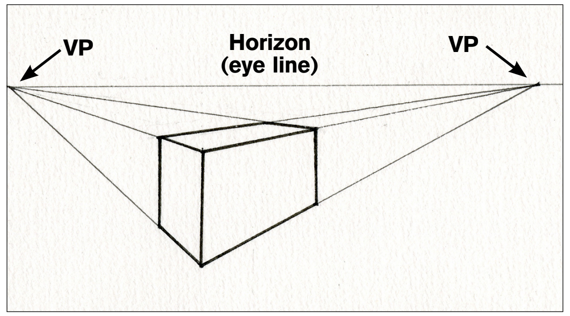
Faint lines that follow the angles of the top and bottom edges of side B were drawn out until they converged on the horizon. This point is the vanishing point (VP).

With these lines in place, the remaining edges of side B could be drawn in with relative ease.

Tip

It is worth noting that in this example, the angle between A and B cannot be a right angle.





Two-point perspective and the horizon

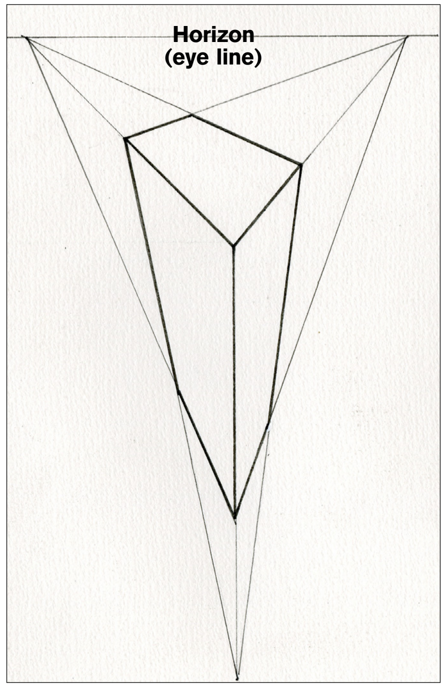
The line of the horizon or eye level will depend on the relative position of the viewer. The lower the viewer, the further down the picture plane the eye level will be; conversely, the higher the viewer, the higher the eye level.

In the example on the right, we can see the top face of the box shape. This is because we are higher than the building and our eye level is therefore higher.

Three-point perspective

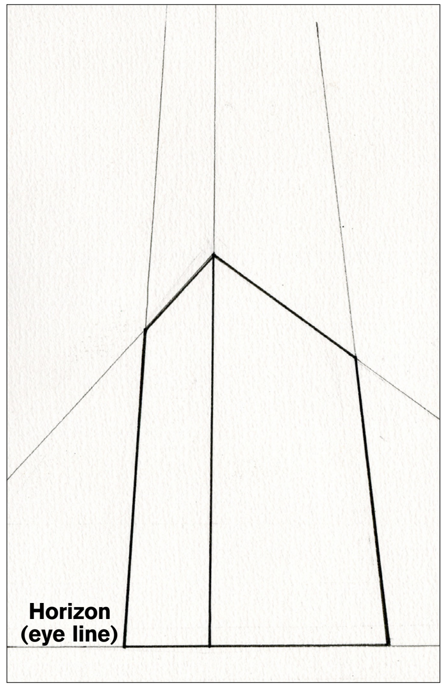
Three-point perspective is used when the uprights of an extremely tall building are also affected by perspective; the vertical lines converging as they recede into the sky or the ground. This tends to occur when your eyeline is either extremely high, known as a bird's-eye-view, or extremely low, known as a worm's-eye-view.

In both cases, the technique for working out the vanishing point is the same, except that the vanishing point does not sit on the horizon.



Bird's-eye-view

Note that the vanishing points for the sides of the building converge on the horizon, but not the vanishing point of the verticals.

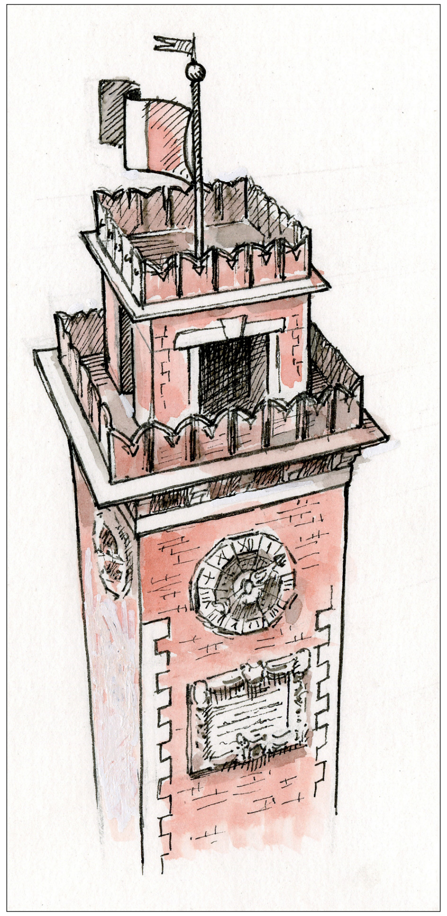


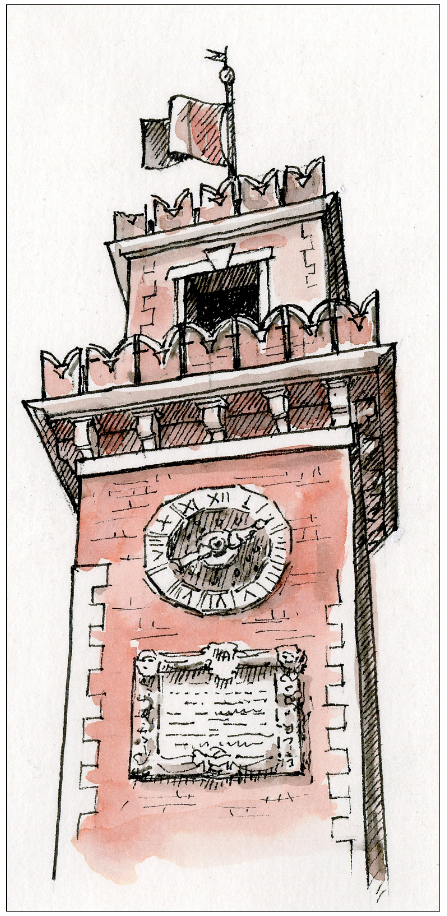
Worm's-eye-view

In this example, the vanishing points are not visible, because the lines of perspective do not converge before the edges of the frame.

Clock Tower, Arsenale, Venice

These drawings, of an old clock tower guarding the entrance to the Naval Museum in Venice, are examples of three-point perspective. I based the worm's-eye-view on a photograph I took while leading a painting holiday there. The bird's-eye-view is based on the same photograph, but I worked out the shape using the techniques on these pages.





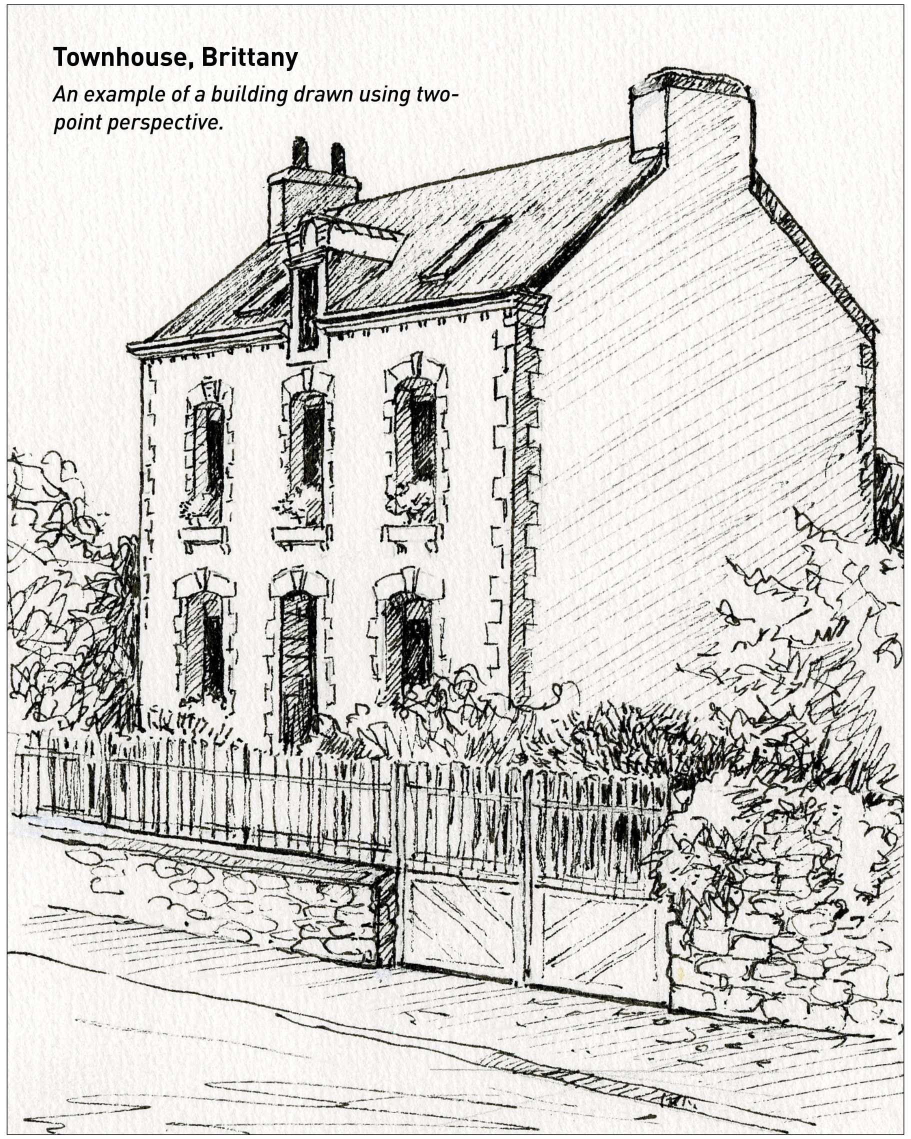
Using linear perspective

Once you understand the principles of linear perspective, you can start to draw without adding any guidelines.

When drawing buildings close-to, trying to establish the exact vanishing points can be difficult, as they can be off the edge of the paper. In these cases, drawing the converging lines is impractical, and you will find that just being aware of them is enough.

In the example to the right, the lines of the roof, the front of the chimney tops, the skylights, windows, door, fence and pavement all meet at a vanishing point on the left, whereas the near side of the chimneys, the dormer window and side wall of the house are less sharply angled and converge at a vanishing point off the page to the right.

Practise visualising the guidelines and vanishing points of the example buildings on these pages.

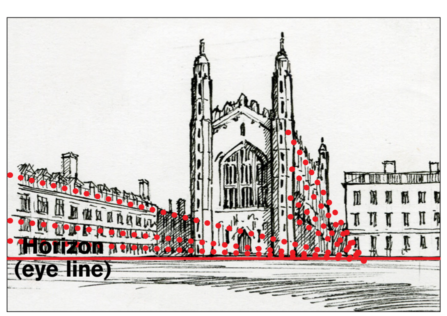


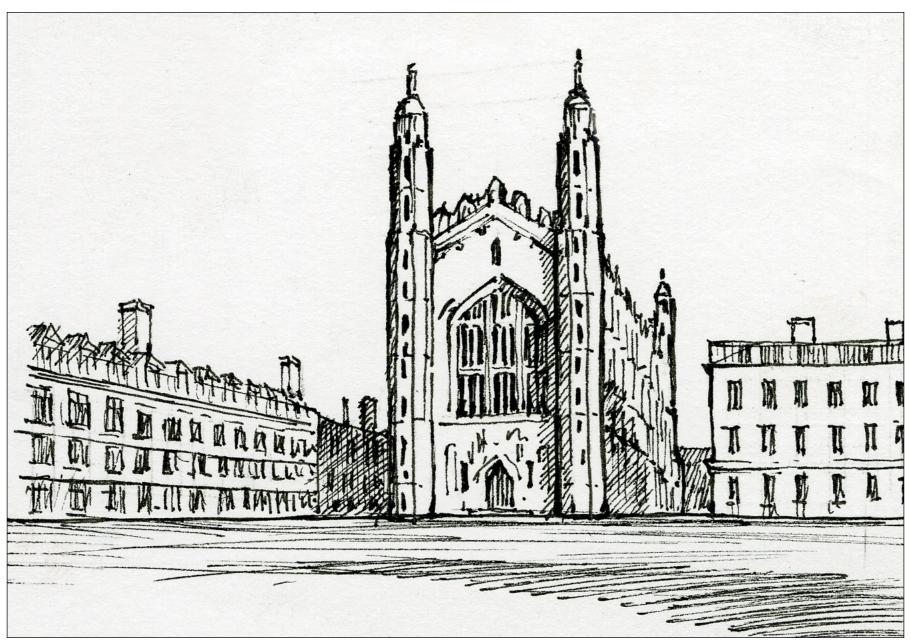
Townhouse, Brittany

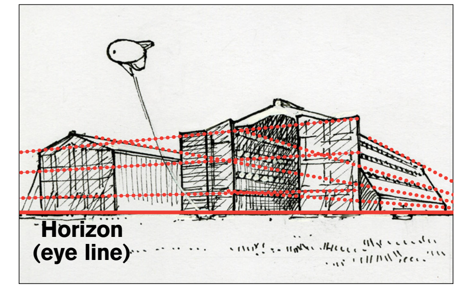
An example of a building drawn using two-point perspective.

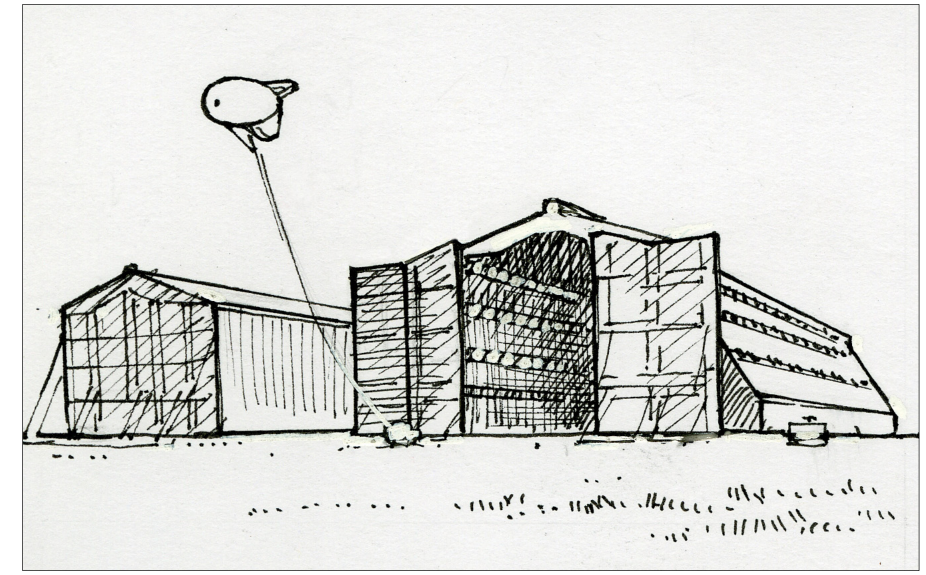
King's College Chapel, Cambridge

As the building to the right of the chapel is face-on to the viewer, the roof, gutters, windows and doors appear horizontal and are not affected by perspective. However, the lines of the side of the chapel and the left-hand buildings converge at a vanishing point on the eye level, as shown by the red lines.



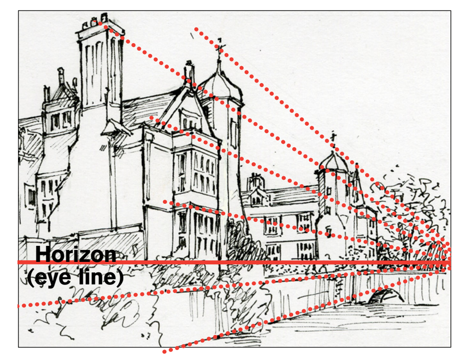






Cardington, Bedfordshire

As both sides of these hangars are angled away to the eye level, there are two vanishing points. The angle of the front of the buildings is shallower than the lines of perspective that represent the length of these huge hangars.





Kentwell Hall, Suffolk

Another example of two-point perspective. As the two wings of the building are so far apart, using the converging lines of perspective is very helpful in making the drawing look effective.

Different aspects of linear perspective

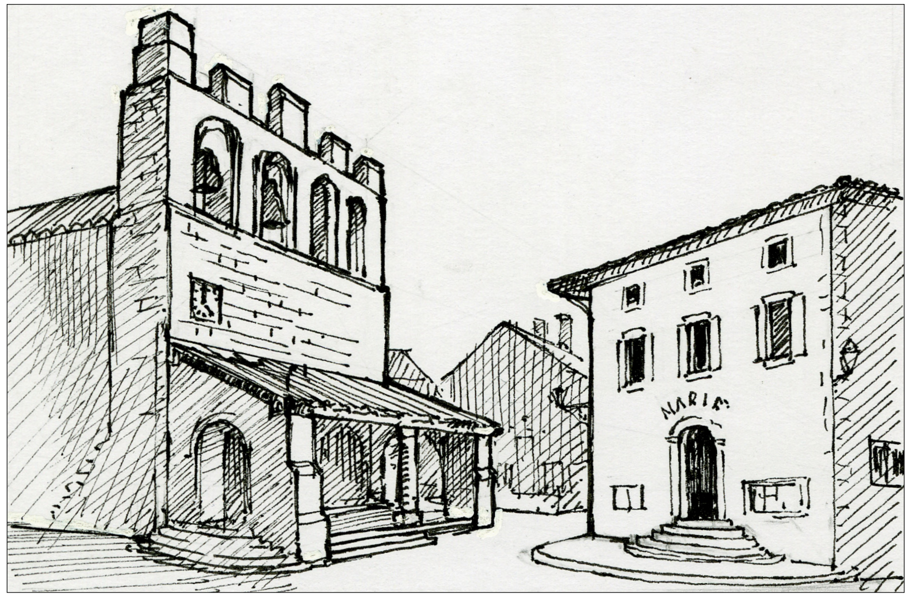
Individual buildings may have different vanishing points if they are not parallel. You may also see this in a curving street, where each house has a different vanishing point.

The examples on this page show some more complex examples of buildings in groups. Try to break down each one, finding the horizon and then identifying the vanishing points for each building.



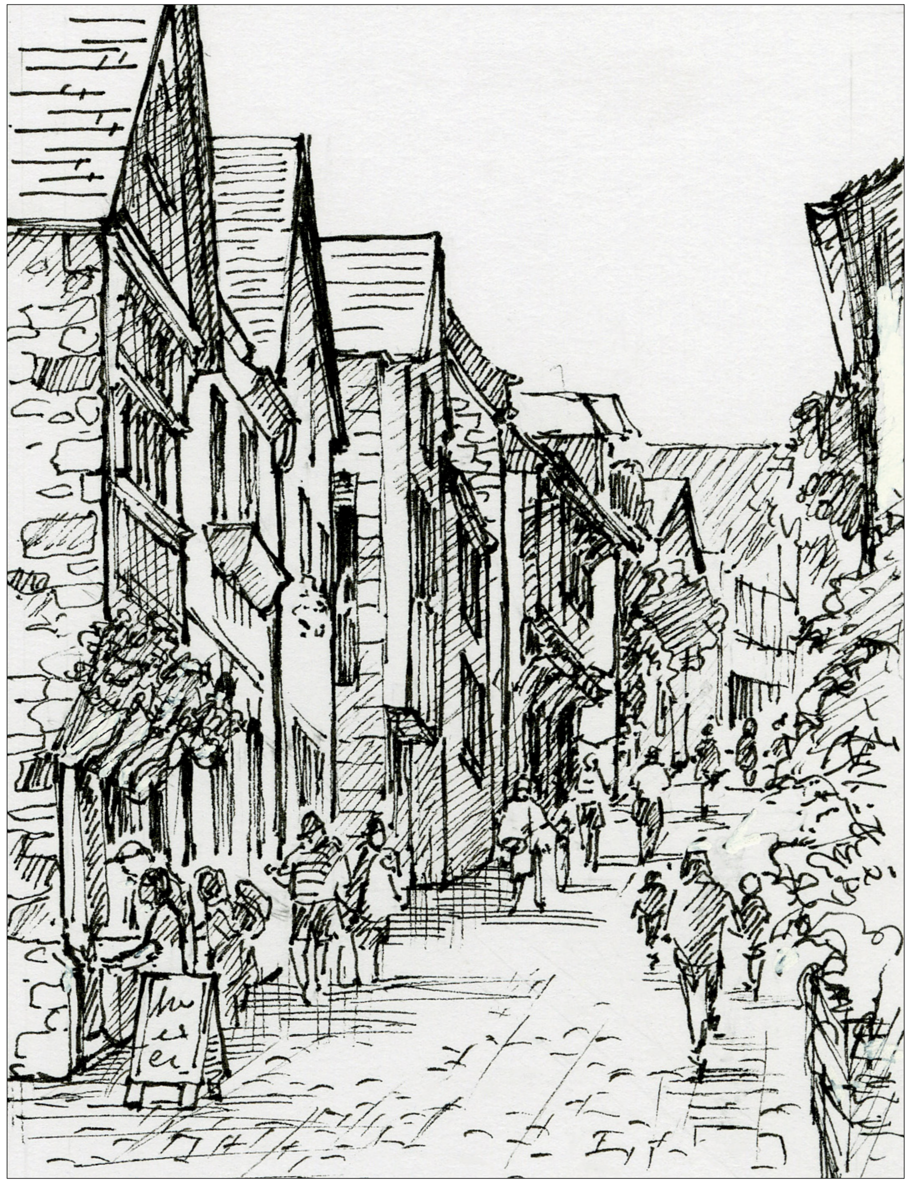
Rooftops, Devon

In this drawing, based on a view of Clovelly, I was high up, looking down on the village which is situated on steeply descending ground. You will have no problem finding the horizon here, but can you identify the two vanishing points (ignoring the circular foreground building)?



Montbrun, Ariège

The church and Mairie are set at angles to one another in the central square of this little village; consequently they each have two vanishing points, most of which are set outside the edges of the drawing.



Rue du Jerzual, Dinan

In this sketch, the viewer is looking up a very steep, cobbled street. The guttering, windowsills and door frames signify the true lines of perspective. They all converge towards a low eye level, below the bottom edge of the picture plane.

Streets on a slope

On flat ground, the base of buildings usually indicates the angle of perspective, but in a street that ascends or descends, the base line indicates the angle of gradient. In these cases, ignore the floor level and look for other horizontal lines to help guide you.

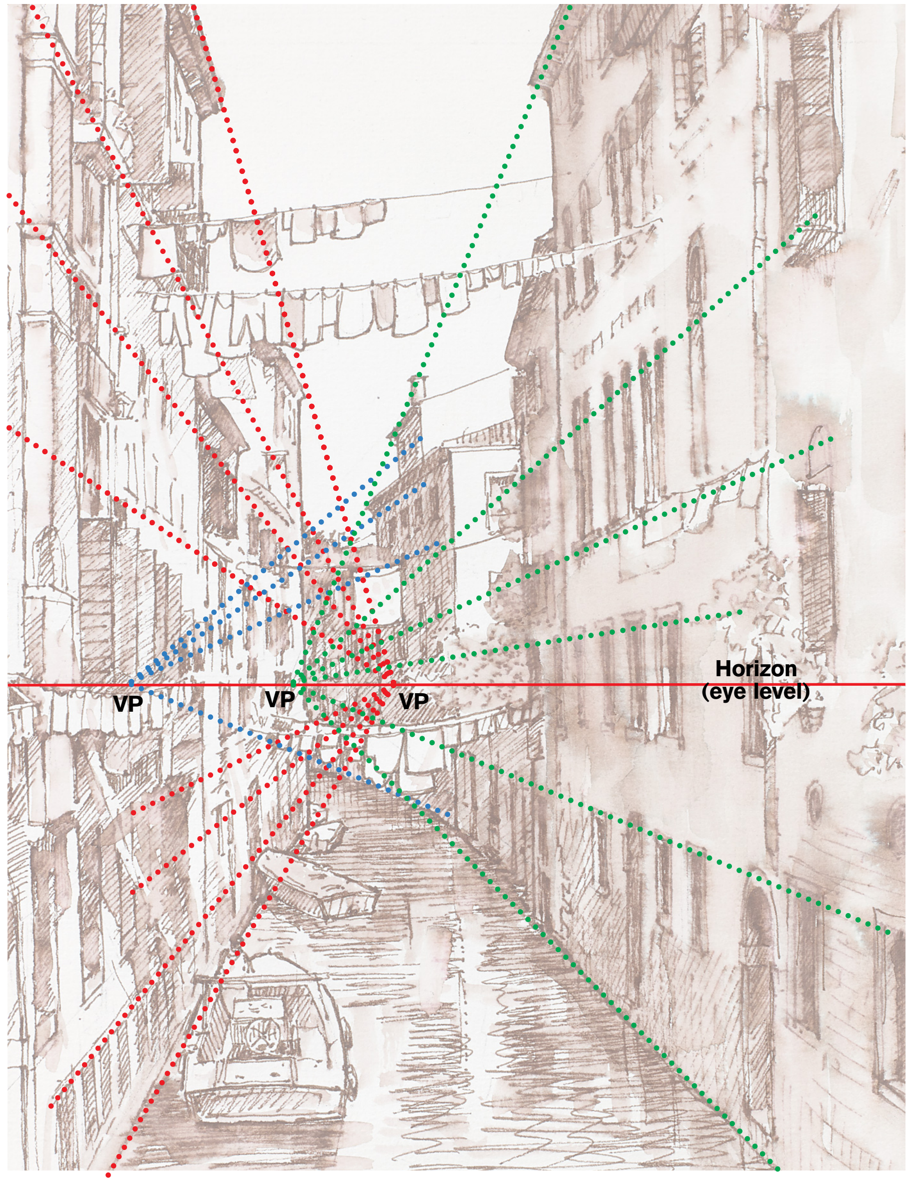


Simplifying with linear perspective

This complex scene is a fantastic example of how useful linear perspective can be in breaking down the view in front of you and making it manageable to draw.

The diagram to the right shows the horizon (eye level), the main lines of perspective and the three main vanishing points. You can see from the diagram that there are two main vanishing points for the buildings closer to us. The lines leading to these are marked in red and green.

The most distant building on the right has a different vanishing point to the nearer house because it sits at a different angle, following the curve of the canal. This third vanishing point, marked in blue, is of less importance to the overall composition, but would have proven useful if I wanted to add more detail to the distant buildings.



Opposite

Wash Day, Venice Canal

I sketched this view of a canal in Venice from a bridge and also took photographs for reference – always a good idea for such a complicated scene as this. Having drawn the buildings carefully using a brown non-permanent fineliner, I washed in the pen lines using a size 8 watercolour brush to create an overall tone on the right-hand buildings, contrasting with the sunny aspect of the left-hand side.

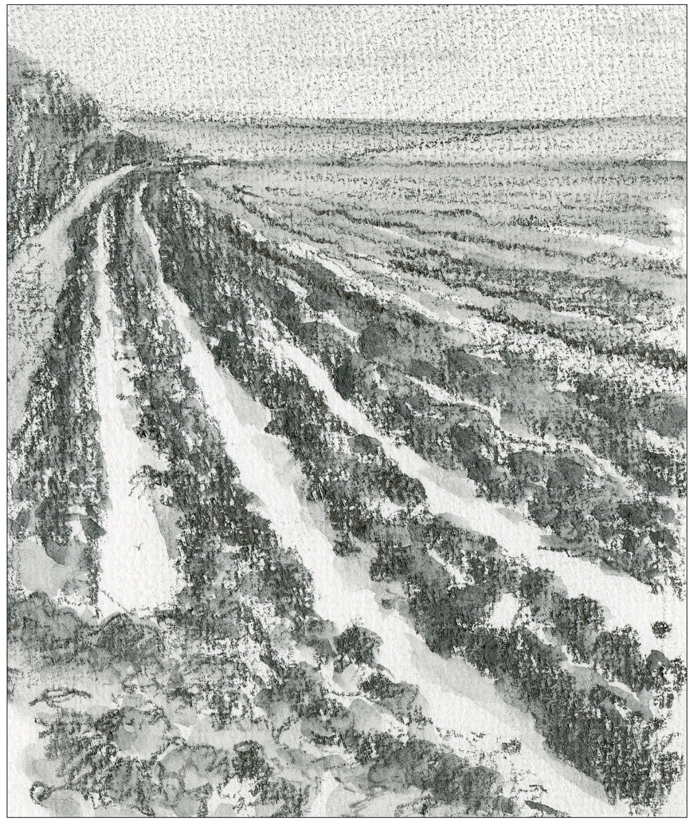
Perspective and the ground

The effects of perspective occur in all sorts of unexpected places – not just in buildings! Linear perspective is a useful tool for helping to identify and draw complex areas of the ground in landscapes.



Île De Brehat, Brittany

I like the long, slightly meandering lines of different coloured lettuces diminishing into the distance. I used four Graphitint pencils – ivy (11), slate green (08), port (01) and shadow (05) – to draw this scene, adding water to blend the colours. The colour of the earth is a mix of ivy and port.



Puddles and Ploughed Field

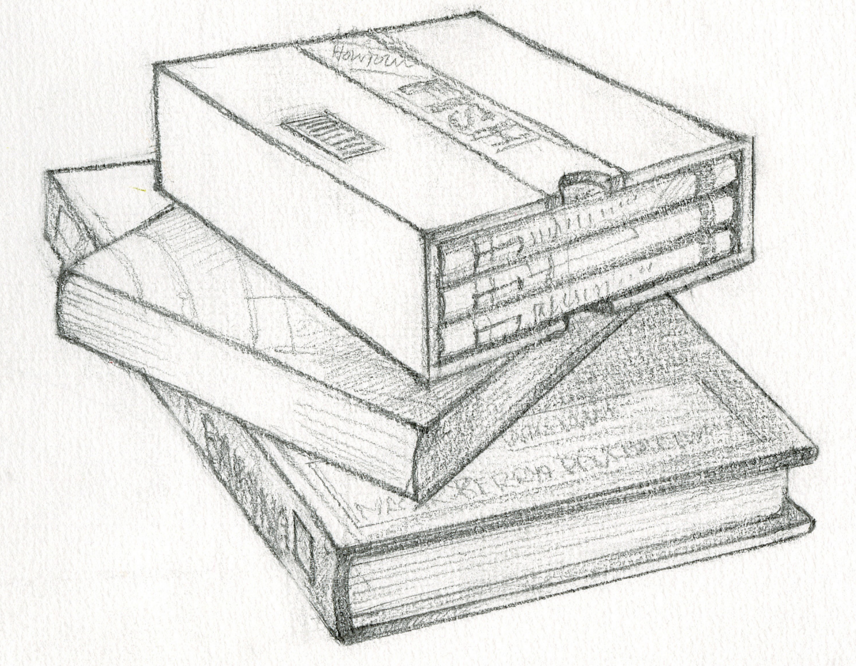
In this scene, worked with a dark water-soluble graphite pencil, the long, receding lines of the furrow curve and then converge at a point in the distance.

Perspective close-to

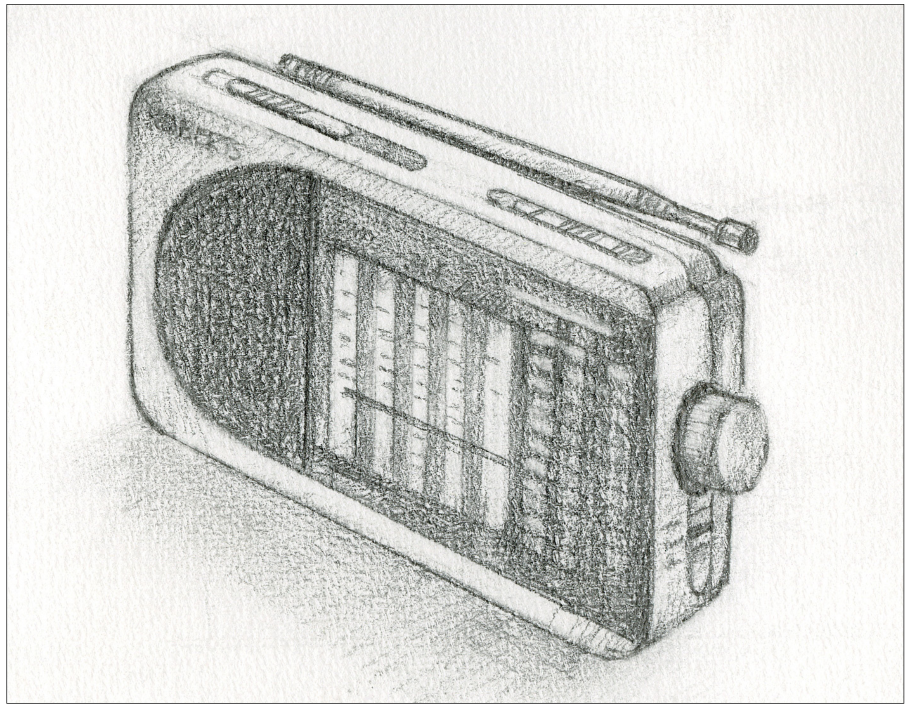
This a simple exercise to practise drawing perspective. Place a small stack of books about 1m (3ft) from you at varying angles to one another. This will create a different set of vanishing points for each book.

Starting with the top book, measure the angles of the receding sides (see page 56) and start to draw.

As well as measuring the converging lines, observe the shapes between the books which will help you achieve an accurate drawing.



Three Books



Portable Radio

Drawing ordinary, everyday objects is always good practice. I did not put in the vanishing points in this study of my radio as the angles were so shallow, but made sure the lines converged slightly to make the drawing look correct.

Suggesting scale

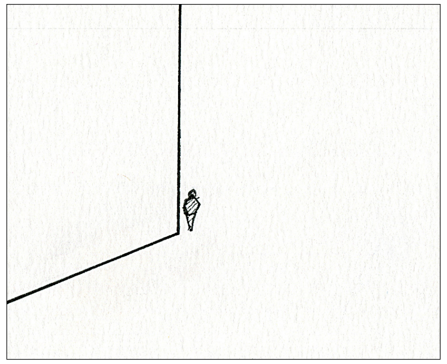
As we have seen earlier, figures not only animate a drawing, but can be vital in creating a sense of scale in your drawings, particularly of buildings. Look at the examples to the right to see how the relative sizes of the figures can alter the apparent size and proportions of their surroundings.

Linear perspective is also useful in placing figures correctly in the picture. In general, as people are a similar height when stood on flat ground, their heads will be on the same level.

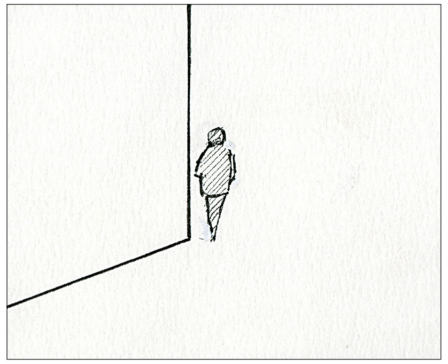
Look at the two diagrams where the wall shapes are identical and the horizon is drawn in the same place. In the diagram on the left, the viewer and the figures are on the same level and their heads are level with the line of the horizon. This is how we might view people in the street. In the second example we could be looking down at the figures from an upstairs window – they are drawn much smaller and the horizon line is above their heads.

Tip

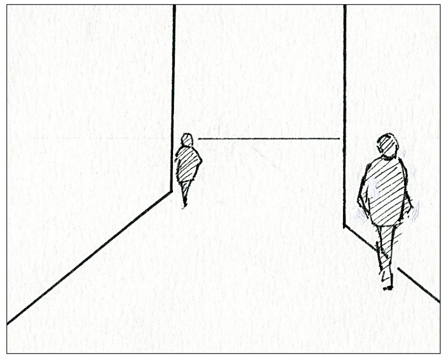
If you are not sure what size and where to place figures correctly in a composition, draw the figure on some tracing paper and move it around over your drawing to help you find the correct position and relative size.



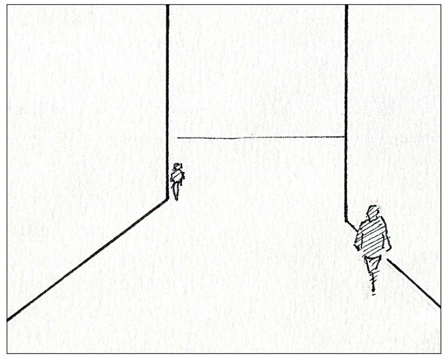
The small figure here is dwarfed by a shape which reads as a high wall or tall building.



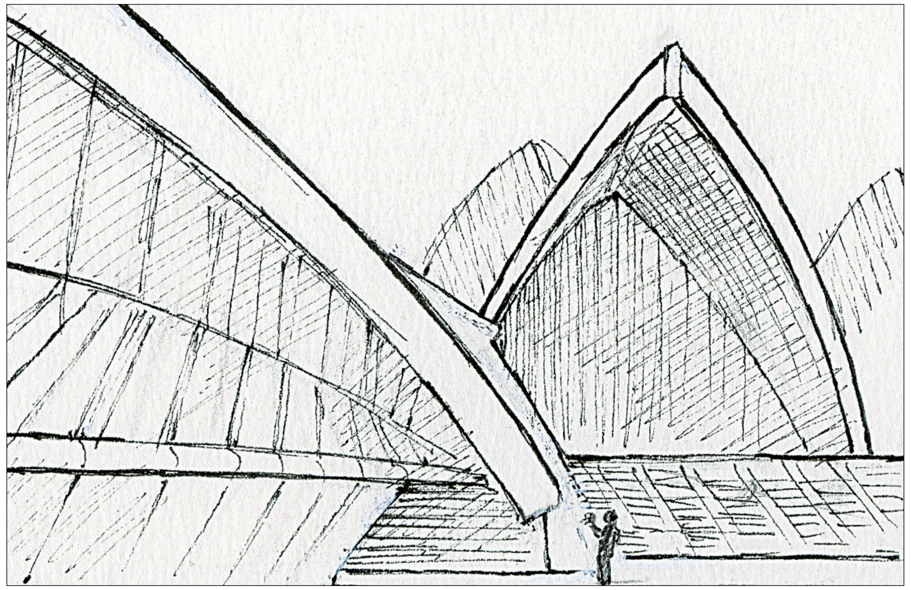
Here, the exact same shape appears as in the example to the left, but as the figure is much larger, the wall or building appears significantly smaller.



Here we appear to be looking at two figures at the same street level as us. The angled shapes look like walls.

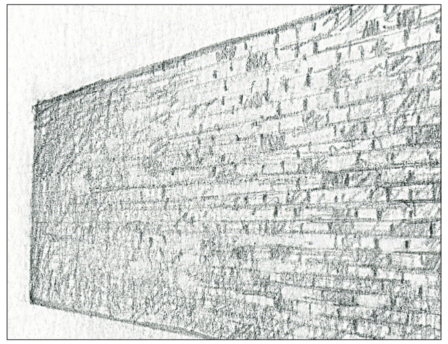


The shapes are replicated here, but the figures are drawn smaller and below the line of the eye level, which makes the buildings feel much bigger.



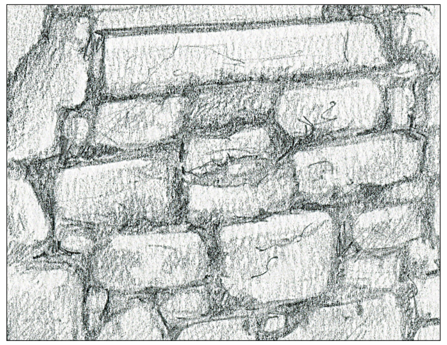
Sydney Opera House

Adding a small figure in the foreground of this picture emphasises the vast size of this beautiful, iconic building.



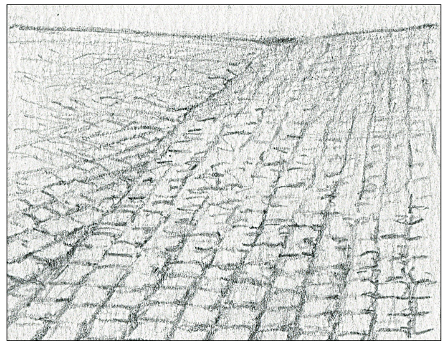
Brickwork

There is no need to draw every brick to create the texture of brickwork. As long as some lines of pointing are in perspective, a few vertical lines can be added in small sporadic groups to give the impression of bricks.



Stonework

Stones are often irregular shapes, sizes and colours with cracks and fissures throughout. The pointing is consequently uneven and can be darker or lighter than the stones depending on the light source.



Cobbles

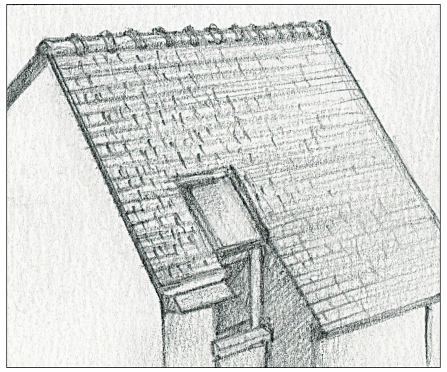
Here the cobbles are flat, irregularly shaped, square setts. The rows between them are wider and darker than the horizontal divisions. Old cobbles are often shiny through years of wear. In this example, two areas intersect, making unusual patterns.

Buildings and texture

Although they are usually seen from a greater distance than figures or animals, buildings can also offer the artist a lot of interesting texture to include in the drawing.

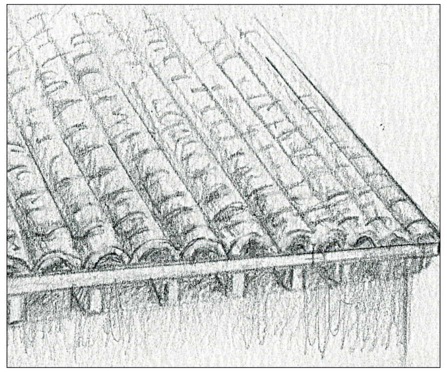
Because of their size and clean lines, it is not necessary to add so much elaborate detail. Do consider the perspective in a brick wall or a roof, but the patterns formed by the individual bricks or the tiles should be suggested rather than drawn in intricate detail.

Stone walls, seen up close, have larger pieces which can make an interesting feature, but again, seen as part of a landscape, one can just suggest minimal detail.



Tiled roof

The pitch tiles are rounded with ridges across them. I have indicated the lines of tiling in perspective, then added some divisions here and there following the angle of the roof. Details are more marked nearer the viewer, fading away to a general grey tone.

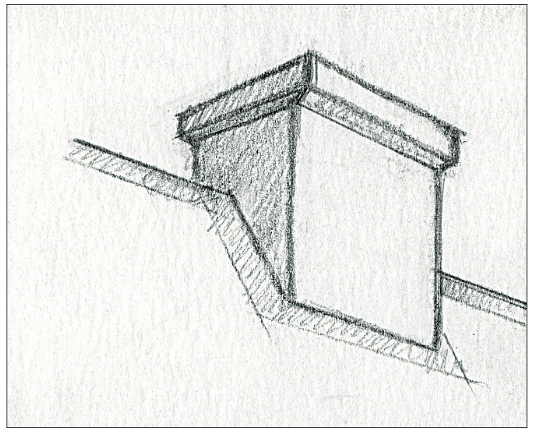


Pantiled roof

The semi-circular ends of the tiles set the style for the rest of the roof. Again, I have put in more detail in the foreground. The tiles rest on a horizontal beam, which in turn is supported by struts. Many roofs are structured in this way and it pays to get some of this detail in to make the roof look right. Avoid making the overhang too shallow.

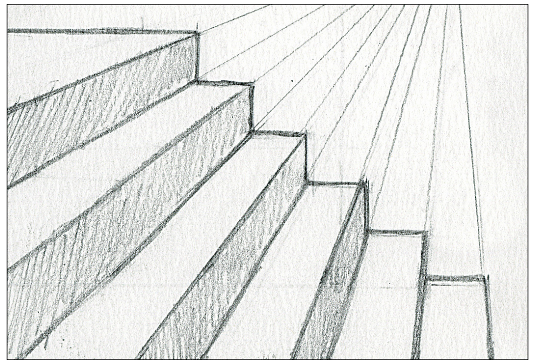
More details for buildings

As well as perspective affecting the overall drawing of the principal parts of the building, do not forget about the other smaller features such as the windows, door, chimney pots, steps, paving stones or even a flower box or doormat. They, too, are similarly governed by the laws of perspective and, although they may appear less significant, getting these correct can make a big difference to the finished study.



Chimney

Chimney stacks often straddle the roof. Each face of the chimney recedes to the same vanishing points as the gutter, windows and so forth. As they are often the highest point of the building, the lines of perspective are at a greater angle.



Steps and stairs

It is easy to get 'lost' when drawing steps or stairs as there as many lines receding to the vanishing point. Shading in the risers or treads, depending on the light source, will help to define the three-dimensional effect.



Doorway

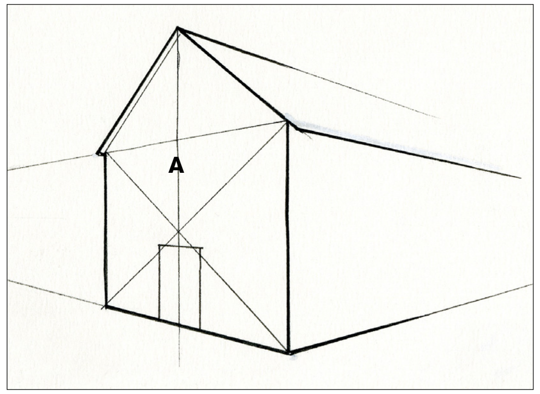
Many architectural details are so beautifully designed and elaborate that they can stand alone as studies.

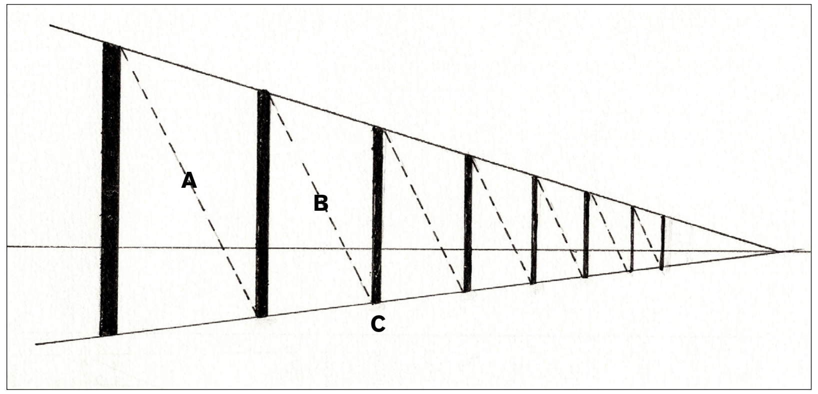
Finding the centre of a rectangle

To find the centre of a rectangle in perspective, draw diagonals across from corner to corner. The vertical line drawn through where they intersect will be the centre line (A). This is useful to help place a doorway centrally or, by extending it (as below), the pitch of the roof.

Regular spacing

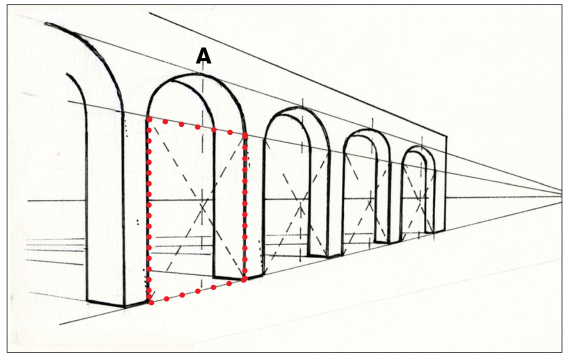
The gap between items that are regularly spaced, such as fenceposts, or colonnades, decreases as the objects recede towards the horizon. To assess this distance, once the first two have been drawn, put in the lines of perspective at the top and bottom. Draw a diagonal from the top of one post to the base of the next (A), then a parallel diagonal from the top of the second one to meet the base line (B). Where the diagonal meets the base line, draw a vertical for the third post (C). Repeat this for however many posts (or other uprights) there are.



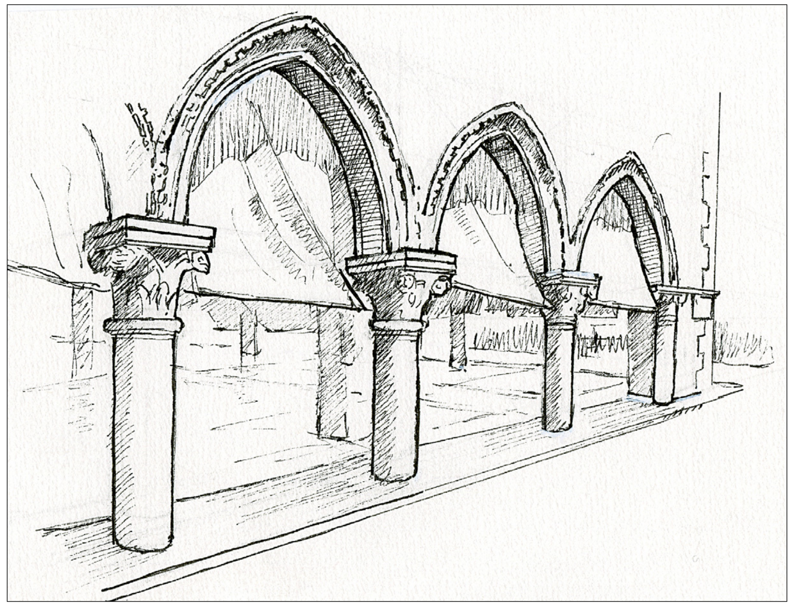


Arches

Use the method above to draw a set of evenly-spaced pillars in perspective. To establish the height of the arches, draw in the line of perspective using the apex (top) of the arch to guide you (A). Construct a rectangle from the top of the pillar to the apex of the arch (highlighted in red dotted lines below). Dissect the rectangle with two diagonals (as described above) to find its centre. Use this centre line as a guide to help draw the elliptical curve of each arch.



This technique works for any sort of arch, whether round (as in the diagram above), or pointed, as in the example to the right.



Using the outlines

The outline drawings for the step-by-step projects in this book are provided; you can transfer the outline to your paper using the techniques described here. The outlines can be used to help build your confidence if you are starting out, or you can copy the drawings freehand in order to work the drawing from scratch.

You can also use the outlines to quickly and repeatedly practise the same project without having to draw the outlines each time. This will allow you to try different shading and tonal techniques on the projects, or to try the projects with a different drawing medium, using the information from the relevant section of the book.

Outline 15 is a collection of simple shapes that you can practise shading techniques upon – I have added small dots to give you a light source for each image, but as you can re-use the outlines, try experimenting with different or multiple light sources on the same objects. Outline 16 is a similar collection of animals for you to shade.

Tracing the design



1 Scribble over the back of the outline paper with a soft 6B pencil.



2 Turn the outline paper over and tape it down over your paper. Draw over all the lines with a ballpoint pen or hard pencil.



3 Lift up the outline to reveal the drawing transferred onto the paper ready for painting. You may need to reinforce some of the lines with a pencil directly on the paper.

Using tracedown paper

Tracedown paper is like carbon paper, but with graphite (the same mineral used to make pencils). You simply position your outline, stick it down at the top with masking tape, then slide the tracedown paper, dark side down, in between the carbon paper and your drawing paper. You then use a pencil or dried-out ballpoint pen to trace over the lines. Check the image has transferred thoroughly and clearly. The image transferred in this way can be erased, as with a normal pencil drawing.



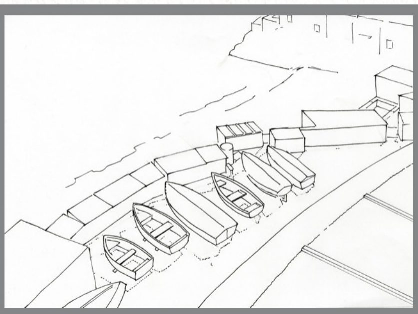
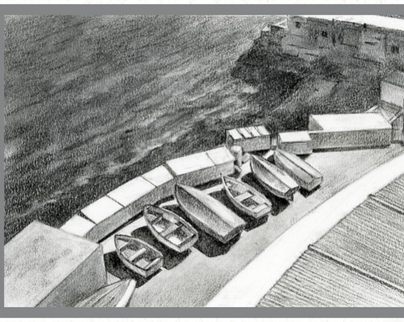
1 Tape your paper to a drawing board, then place tracedown paper on top. Tape your outline on top of this. Go over the lines with a ballpoint pen. Do not press too hard, or you can scar the paper. Be careful not to press with the heel of your hand, as this can leave a mark as well.



2 Lift the outline and tracedown paper to reveal the drawing transferred on to the watercolour paper. You may need to go over some of the lines with a pencil.

Index



Take the first step to drawing with this easy-to-follow course on producing fantastic pictures with pen, pencil and more.

Carole Massey's expert practical advice and simple step-by-step approach will quickly get you drawing. With advice on sketching, perspective, capturing movement, accuracy, figures, animals, landscapes and much more, this is an invaluable guide for any aspiring artist.

